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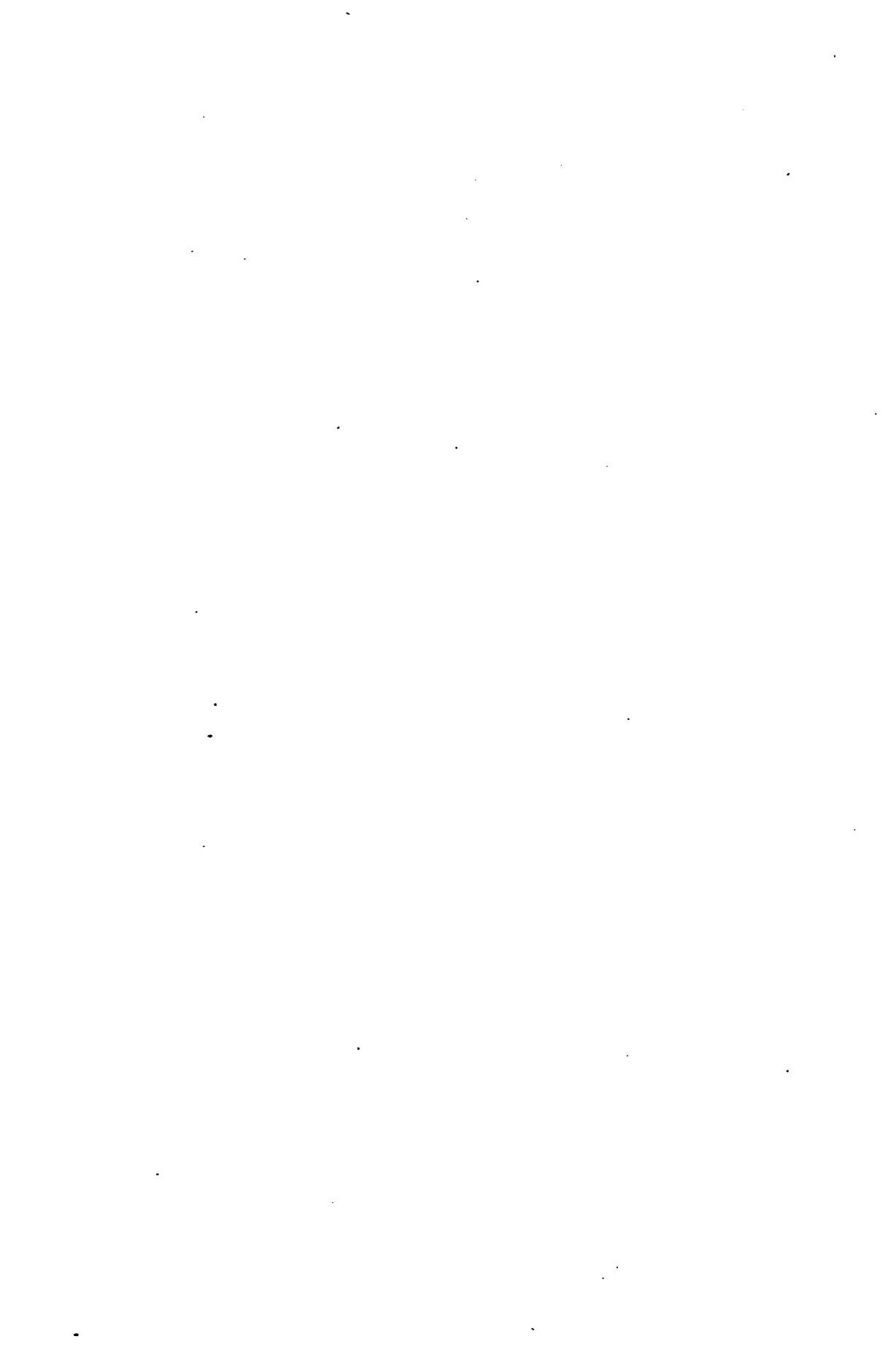
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HOME CHIMES.

EDITED BY

F. W. ROBINSON.

VOLUME THE THIRD.



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HOME CHIMES

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This mode of treatment, it must be remarked, Guy seemed to find exactly to his taste, but it was not to continue, and in this wise was the end of it.

Mrs. O'Connell had been spending the evening with her bosom friend Mrs. Stuffins, and came home so full of news that it was a physical impossibility for her even to contain herself until she had taken off her bonnet and shawl.

She burst into the drawing-room, where her two daughters were at needlework, and her husband sat reading.

"Shut the door, can't ye?" was the polite greeting of the latter, emphasized by a growl.

"I've been so taken aback," proclaimed Mrs. O'Connell excitedly, "it's made my heart so bad, and my head is fit to split. When I got to Mrs. Stuffins's who should be there but her brother Edward on a visit, and I must tell you his wife is very ill, and the doctor don't know what's the matter with her, and she is coming up to London to see a physician. I recommended Parks, but her own doctor says Vincent, who, as I told him, mismanaged my poor mother's case, as you know, James, and she might have been alive at this day, though she did certainly go to Smith first, and the garden-roller went over her big toe——"

"What are ye talkin' about?" snarled O'Connell. "What's your mother's big toe to do with it? If ye've anything to say, say it; if not, leave me alone."

"Now, I'll not speak another word," exclaimed the aggrieved lady, with great bitterness. "You always interrupt me, James, just as I am coming to the point, and then blame me for not being quicker."

A snarl of contempt was her husband's only reply, and then the two girl's broke in.

"How absurd you are, ma!" said Constance tartly.

"There, it's always the way," cried Violet. "Directly I get interested in anything—at least before I get interested in it—somebody says something to somebody else, and then somebody else—Oh, I don't know—but it's very provoking."

"Your mother always makes such tremendous rigmaroles about nothing at all," growled the old man. "There's no gettin' a simple story out of her."

Mrs. O'Connell here flounced out of the room in the highest dudgeon, followed in a minute or two by her daughters, who were as eager to hear gossip as she was to tell it.

Constance returned in about half an hour's time, and found her father at the same page of his book as when she went. The fact was the old fellow was as curious as anybody, but he could not very well show it, after his affectation of indifference.

"Well, have ye heard the wonderful story?—some stupid nonsense, I'll warrant," he said, struggling to appear careless.

"It's only about Mr. Ashton," replied Constance, resuming her work.

Her father shifted irritably in his chair for a few seconds, growling and snorting in an uncomfortable fashion, while Constance, bending over her work, seemed to derive much amusement from her own thoughts.

"Well let's have it," cried the old man at last, in a hoarse voice, "Why don't ye speak instead of sitting grinning there?"

"I thought you didn't want to hear," said Constance coldly.

"But I do," roared her father in a fury.

"It seems Mr. Edward King knows Mr. Ashton's relations," said Constance in the same tone, "His father is a baronet, very rich, living in the north of England, near Durham I think—Guy is second son, but he has property of his own, left him by an aunt. Guy wanted to be an engineer, his relations wanted him to go to college, so he did neither till he was twenty-one, when he came to London to study with a famous firm of engineers, and in the end it's supposed he will go into partnership with them."

O'Connell's eyes had assumed the shape and dimensions of small saucers.

"I expect it's all rubbish," he muttered, but in his secret heart he was far from thinking so. He called on Mr. King next morning taking a photograph of his lodger from Constance's album, to make assurance doubly sure, and found the story was substantially true.

"A year thrown away and wasted," he said to himself in anguish as he went home, "I made sure he was a poor devil of a clerk, or something of the kind. I've even snubbed him when I thought he seemed to be getting too thick with those girls."

He groaned aloud at the recollection.

And now a swift and sudden change came over the behaviour of the family to Guy Ashton, but he was too much wrapt up in his studies at the time to take any particular notice of it. One thing, however, he could not help seeing, namely, that Constance O'Connell was left on his hands to a considerable extent. He found with surprise that he was in the habit of walking to and from church with her on Sunday; he observed that she had taken to playing the music he liked, which she had previously despised as "slow," that if she had two tickets for a concert or a theatre, none of the others could ever accompany her, and as she would be dreadfully disappointed at not going, he was compelled to volunteer, and sundry other little things of the same sort.

The ordinary smart youth would have taken in the situation at a glance, but Guy laboured under two disadvantages; in the first place, he was entirely deluded as to the sort of people he lived with, in the second, he was a genuine enthusiast as regarded his chosen profession. The former circumstance made him unsuspecting, and the latter kept him so.

Things went on in this way for some months, and Mrs. O'Connell waxed impatient. Nothing seemed to come of it all. But her husband bade her mind her own business, and leave the affair to his superior skill. His confidence in himself was well justified, for though he had no wide knowledge of the world, he had that instinctive sympathy with the baser part of man's nature which often does duty for it reasonably well.

"Let 'em alone," he said. "He'll take fire sooner or later."

But about this time Guy was rudely awakened to a sense of his position. He used to avoid O'Connell's friends as much as possible, as they did not seem to be desirable people to know, but one of them, a fat unctuous plebeian named Mullins, declined to be avoided.

"Well, Ashton," he said one day, meeting Guy

in the street, "I suppose I've got to congratulate you."

"Indeed?" queried Guy. "What about?"

"Oh you're a sly customer, you are," said Mullins, with a leer of astounding knowingness. "When's the happy event to come off?"

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Guy, impatiently.

"Not to be acknowledged yet, ain't it?" remarked Mullins, with an insufferable air of familiarity. "Well she's a nice gurl, that's what she is, and she'll make you a good wife."

"Your recommendation carries weight I admit," replied Guy, "but even now I don't know whom you are talking of."

"Oh go along," said Mullins. "Anybody would think you was ashamed of her. What I always say is give me a gurl as can cook a pint of meat, and Connie O'Connell can do it to rights."

"Connie O'Connell," gasped Guy, feeling something like an electric shock tingle through him from top to toe.

"You needn't look so surprised," said Mullins in a vexed tone. "P'raps I oughtn't to have said anything, but other people are talking of it, and I didn't know but what it was all fair and square."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Guy, "that anybody besides yourself looks upon me as engaged to Miss O'Connell?"

Mullins nodded. "Everybody that knows you. Do you mean to tell me you ain't? Because—but there, I know you, Ashton. You are a straightforward fellow, and wouldn't play a double game with any young woman. Somehow or other you've made Connie very fond of you, and if you were to forsake her now, you'd break her heart. You are a lucky fellow, Ashton. She will make you a good wife. I've known her since she was a child. God bless you both."

Guy's first and most potent feeling after this disclosure was, very naturally considering his youth and inexperience, one of gratified vanity. The consequences of Connie's affection might be inconvenient for him, but after all he felt he could not blame her. Nor was he on mature consideration inclined to be surprised; on the contrary, he rather wondered that it had never occurred to any one else to fall in love with him. She was older than he, and he had looked upon her as cold and self-reliant, when all the while she had been longing to lean upon him. He felt himself two inches taller, and proportionately broader across the chest. His heart swelled with what he was sure was noble emotion; he found himself murmuring, "poor girl—poor Connie," in a broken voice, and he repressed tears only by the stern reflection that they were unmanly.

A hundred little incidents of the past few months, which had seemed till now very unimportant, recurred to his memory with strange vividness. She had leaned heavily on his arm as they had walked home one night; she had certainly smiled very sweetly once or twice when he bade her good morning; she would sit and watch him often when she thought he did not notice her.

On the whole, now he came to think of it, he was disposed to believe he was in love with her a little.

Inexperienced youths of one or two-and-twenty are peculiarly susceptible to such attacks as this;

but then, fortunately for them, there is generally some stern parent or cool-headed friend near to tell them they are asses, and to remove them from the influence of the charmer for a week or so, and no harm is done.

But Guy had no one to advise him, and he was in hands equally skilful and unscrupulous. He had no chance whatever, and about a month after his conversation with Mullins he proposed to and was accepted by Connie O'Connell.

Tempests ensued. Sir Slingsby Ashton rushed down to the rescue with his family lawyer, and cursed, and swore, and bullied; whereby, of course, he only succeeded in making things worse than ever. He nearly came to blows with O'Connell, he wanted to thrash Guy, and used shocking language to Mrs. O'Connell, who tried desperately but in vain, to faint and to have fits, and he departed at length quite vanquished, swearing that Guy should never again set foot in Ashton Hall.

"Your father is very violent," remarked Connie when he was gone; "do you think you will be able to get round him again?"

The phrase did not please Guy, but he let it pass.

"Dearest," he said with effusion, "what does it matter? I shall have you."

"Yes, I know," replied Connie, "but won't it make a difference to your income if you can't make it up?"

A cloud crossed Guy's face, but his previous look of fatuous beatitude returned almost immediately.

"What a mercenary Connie," he cooed; "of course it will make some difference, but I have enough for us both, even if I am unsuccessful in my profession, which I don't think I shall be. You would like me to be great and famous I know, Connie, and I am going to try hard for your sake."

"I shall want a grand piano," remarked Connie. "Shall we have a footman in livery, Guy?"

"There will be time enough to think of those things in the future, as we are not to be married for a year," observed Guy.

"Oh, I'm sure I beg your pardon," blazed forth Connie, "I don't want to know anything about it, I can assure you."

This turn of affairs necessitated laborious explanations, with the usual hardly-won reconciliation to follow, and this small scrap of conversation is on the whole a fair sample of the courtship.

Violet explained the state of things to her friends with her accustomed perspicacity.

"They're very fond of each other," said she, "at least they're always quarrelling and making it up, or else not making it up; and I think it's all her fault, though he's mostly in the wrong, and they are both to blame. But if I were *him* I wouldn't stand it, though after all she allows him to do far too much as he pleases."

Mrs. O'Connell was much occupied in visiting all her numerous acquaintances to blazon abroad the great news of her daughter's engagement to the son of a baronet, and to mention that Sir Slingsby, as she familiarly called him, had paid them a visit. She did not mention the exact reason for this condescension on the baronet's part, but left it to be inferred that he had been very pleasant. In no long time she had succeeded

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in convincing herself—if no one else—that this was really true, and even that he had paid her marked attention, and been very kind in inquiring about her health.

CHAPTER II.

A CRICKET MATCH.

Gur's engagement was two or three weeks old when, as he walked one morning down Whitehall towards his office in Westminster, somebody touched him on the shoulder and cried—

"Hello, Guy, old chap, I'm very glad to see you!"

A tall, athletic, gentlemanly young fellow, with a mahogany-coloured face, was the speaker. He was carrying a long green bag.

Guy clasped his hand warmly.

"Lynton, by all that's wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Where did you spring from?"

"Just listen," said Lynton rapidly. "Last week I played in a College match at Cambridge—two days—and in a county match at Manchester—three days—the last three days I've been playing for the Varsity at Lord's, and now I'm just off home for a local match there. Next week I'm booked for an All-England match at Huddersfield, and then—"

"Stop—stop," cried Guy, laughing, "I'm overwhelmed already. You are as fond of the game as when we were at Harrow, then?"

"Oh, yes," replied Lynton with energy. "More so. What a confounded shame it was that they didn't play you for the school in your last year, Guy! They had no bowler like you, and I told them so, but it was of no use; that conceited little ass, Lawrence, was jealous of you. Did you see his analysis against the Australians the other day? Gad, it was ridiculous. Twenty-seven overs for sixty-five runs and two wickets. But you're not looking very fresh old fellow. You want a holiday. Ah, and that reminds me we're a bowler short at home. Our best man has sprained his ankle. Come down with me and stay at the Grange. My father will be delighted to see you again—he often talks of you—and so will Iseult. You can manage it if you try."

Guy's face flushed with excitement. He had not played cricket for more than a year, and the Grange was a jolly place, and the morning was perfect.

"I might be able to get away," he said irresolutely.

And two hours later he was in a first-class smoking compartment with Lynton, and two long green bags were in the netting above their heads.

They had telegraphed to the Grange before starting, and on arriving at Stainham station found a dog-cart with a wonderful mare harnessed thereto awaiting them. Driven by Lynton they did the six miles from the station in half-an-hour, though there was no earthly reason for any haste. But it seemed to be considered very creditable to all concerned, and the mare herself was obviously proud of the performance.

The Grange was a picturesque, rambling old house, standing in the midst of a well-wooded park, and as they bowed down the long avenue to the entrance Guy's spirits rose; he forgot the

dreary London suburb, he forgot his toil over sections and specifications, and if the truth must be told, he forgot Connie as well.

Old Mr. Lynton stood at the door to welcome his guest—a fine, stoutly-built, ruddy old gentleman, who had rowed for his University in his day, and could pull a good oar, or ride a rough colt, or make a good bag over the stubble even now.

"Ah, Guy, my boy," he bawled, shaking him by the hand heartily; "I'm very glad to see you. Where have you been these last two years? You ought to have gone to Cambridge with Jack. You don't look so well as you used; that infernal city doesn't suit you, my boy; you're working too hard. Look at the difference between your complexion and Jack's. He's not overdoing himself with work—are you, Jack?"

"Where's Iseult?" continued the old gentleman; "she was here a minute ago. Ah! here she is. I'm telling Guy, my dear, that he doesn't look well, and that he mustn't work too hard."

Iseult was a tall, dark, graceful girl, of about Guy's own age, with a straight nose, lips the shape of Cupid's bow, wonderful deep, dark eyes, and a broad white forehead, hidden by what Mr. Swinburne calls "the storm of her hair."

She came forward and shook hands with the visitor.

"Country air will do you good, Mr. Ashton," she said; "but don't allow father's remarks to make you uncomfortable. He always thinks people should have complexions like himself or my mahogany-coloured brother there."

"A day in the sunshine will make a difference to me," replied Guy, reflecting in a dazzled way meanwhile upon the vast difference that a brief period had made in Iseult. There had been a suspicion of the high-class boarding-school in her manner when he had seen her last; but she had travelled since then, and now there was a perfect dignity and easy self-possession about her that astonished him.

Jack carelessly brushed her cheek with his moustache as a brotherly salute, and Guy's heart beat quick—it seemed nearly an insult—but Iseult was quite satisfied apparently.

In a few minutes Guy was following the footman who carried his portmanteau and the long green bag down the long corridor which led to his chamber—a chamber he knew of old—a perfect nest for a Sybarite, filled with easy chairs, sofas covered with rugs and furs, a well-filled bookshelf, pictures, and various nicknacks, with a view from the window of wide, fruitful, undulating uplands, and a far-off glimpse of the sea.

There was plenty of time in which to dress for dinner, so he performed his toilet slowly and luxuriously.

His bedroom at O'Connell's contained two chairs and a battered trunk, besides the dressing-table and washstand, and the looking-glass had been cracked ever since Guy had been there. Wealth was a fine thing, truly! Was not any man a fool to forego it? He looked at his watch, he reflected that Connie was about this time removing the tea-things. Somehow or other the reflection made him angry; but the gong sounded, and he had to finish dressing, which was a good excuse for postponing further thought upon the unpleasant subject.

After dinner they walked in the cool of the evening to the part of the park set apart for the morrow's match. The marquee and scoring-tent were already erected, and the wicket was examined and pronounced to be in perfect order. As they strolled back again, Guy found himself left with Isenlt. He wanted to open a conversation, but he was smitten dumb and stupid. The only remark he could think of was upon the beauty of the evening, but he nobly forebore to make it.

"I suppose," he said at length, after a painful struggle, "I suppose you, like the rest of my friends, consider me very foolish to take to engineering instead of Latin and Greek?"

"No, indeed," she replied quickly. "I am glad you spoke of it, for I wanted to tell you that so far as I can see, which is not far, because I am a woman, I think you have done well."

"Ah," said Guy, much relieved, "you are disgusted then, with our effete University training."

"No, not at all," responded Isenlt. "I only think it ridiculous to suppose it will suit all. Besides, I am romantic, as father calls it, and like to see a man ambitious and daring enough to strike out a path in life for himself, instead of quietly plodding in the old tracks worn by his ancestors. I hope you will succeed."

Guy felt himself suffused by a genial glow of self-satisfaction, which was succeeded by a sickening chill as the figure of Connie O'Connell arose before his mind's eye. He recollects that when he had mentioned his ambition to her she had remarked that she would want a grand piano.

"I have as great a longing," he said, "to perform some great engineering exploit before I die as a poet has to write an immortal poem, or a statesman to link his name with some great measure. To try all my life long, and fail in it at last, would be better to me than to give it up and succeed in something else."

"Then I am sure you have done well," said Isenlt confidently, and Guy's heart swelled within him. "You will have a hard task for some years," she went on, "but you are young and strong, and you have nobody depending upon you, and the harder the fight the better the winning of it."

Guy's heart collapsed to less than its usual size. Nobody depending upon him! Connie again, and for ever Connie. He became silent and gloomy, and walked along mentally comparing Connie's flat, shapeless, undeveloped figure and Celtic face with the face and figure of Isenlt Lynton. Once or twice his lips moved mechanically, and when they did so he felt much as if he had a mouthful of ashes. In the end he was weak enough to make the remark about the weather, which he had previously denied himself.

The match began next morning at eleven. By nine o'clock Jack was out seeing the boundary flags put up, and the wicket rolled for the last time. Mr. Lynton had undertaken to provide luncheon for both teams in the marquee, and from the preparations in progress even at this early hour, one would have supposed that eating, and not cricket, was to be the end and aim of the gathering.

"I shall not put you on to bowl at first, Guy," said Lynton; "you're not in good enough training to bowl all through at your old pace. I shall hold you in reserve for the best bats, who will go in about the middle of the innings."

By a quarter to eleven all the Grange team were on the ground, and a few minutes after the opposing Stainham eleven had arrived. Lynton lost the toss, and the Stainhamites elected to take the innings. It was good to feel himself in flannels once more, Guy thought, and the pungent smell of the close-cut grass, the light-hearted flutter of flags, and the sun-lit expanse of the park, with its gigantic elms and chesnuts, combined to give him a delightful sense of festivity and freedom.

Of the commencement of the match there is little to tell; three wickets were down for twenty-seven runs, and things looked promising for the Grange eleven; but the fourth wicket doubled the score, and the fifth seemed unobtainable. With the score at seventy-five for four wickets, Lynton put Guy on to bowl. He had not held a cricket-ball in his hand for nearly two years; he felt a little nervous.

Lynton, who was keeping wicket, stepped back a pace,—long-stop was directed to do the same,—an extra man was put in the slips. The batsman watched these arrangements with great interest. "Fast, I suppose?" said one of them to Lynton; but Lynton said nothing; his face had a grim expression—he was wondering if Guy's hand had lost its cunning. The said hand flickered in the sunlight above Guy's head next moment, the batsman heard a venomous "whiz," and saw the long-stop struggling with the ball.

"I didn't see it," he remarked uneasily.

Lynton smiled sardonically, and the batsman took a fresh grip of his bat, and settled himself more firmly upon his feet. Next moment his middle stump turned a complete somersault in the air, and he walked away amid a storm of applause.

That was the most sensational incident of the day, no doubt; but the rest of the innings was one long triumph for Guy, who clean-bowled three more men, and had one caught off him; and the innings closed for eighty-nine runs.

"I wish I had put you on at first," moaned Lynton. "Eighty-nine runs is a lot to get with tired men against their bowling, and there will be no time for a second innings."

Things looked blank indeed for the Grange eleven at the commencement of their innings; two wickets fell for seven runs, three for nineteen, four for twenty-six; but Lynton, who had gone in first, was not out and was playing confidently. The fifth wicket took the score to forty-one, but the best bats, except the captain, were gone, and Lynton's face wore a tragic expression. To be brief, when Guy, who was put in last, came to the wickets to face the invincible Lynton, there were still twenty runs wanted to win the match for the Grange team. The afternoon sun was sloping over the ground, the ring of spectators had grown deeper and deeper, the excitement, which had been great, had somewhat subsided, for the match was looked upon as a certainty for the visitors. Guy thought there was no hope; he had never been a very successful bat, but it surprised and encouraged him to find that he was not at all nervous. The bowling had become somewhat loose, and he lifted two successive balls to leg for four each with an ease that greatly surprised himself, and that awoke a sea-like roar from the ring. The next he only just stopped—it was an awfully near thing. Then Lynton scored a two and a single, and Guy had another very narrow escape, and Lynton

made a beautiful three amid shouts of delight. Six runs were still wanted, but Guy's lack of training had begun to tell; he was quite out of breath, and he could hardly see. The ring was only a dark blur, the bowler now about to deliver the ball, even as a tree walking. He shut his eyes, opened his shoulders, and let out.

Something happened—for there rose from that great concourse a shout that shook the towers, and the next instant Lynton was fairly hugging him, and the spectators had broken in upon the wicket, and then both of them were carried on the shoulders of the crowd to the marquee.

It was not until nearly ten minutes afterwards that Guy discovered he had made the hit of the match—an unbelievable six, clean out of the field into an adjacent roadway. Of course he was the hero of the day, and was congratulated by everybody; but his sweetest moment of triumph was when Iseult, as he approached her, left the group she was surrounded by to say warmly and in an almost confidential tone—

"I am so glad! I would not have them lose for anything; and but for you they would have lost."

He had the skin knocked off one of his knuckles, and the abrasion was bleeding a little.

Iseult saw it, and before he knew what she was doing, had bound her handkerchief deftly about it. She was flushed with pleasure, and looked more beautiful than ever.

Guy did not consider the bandage a medical necessity, but he did not say so. He had never felt so happy in his life before that he could remember.

There was a dinner party at the Grange that evening, and his health was proposed by Mr. Lynton, and drunk with great enthusiasm. He went to bed fairly intoxicated with success and applause, and round him all night heard an excited ring of spectators roar, and saw before him Iseult's face, lighted with victory, and felt whenever he awoke Iseult's handkerchief firmly grasped in one hand under his pillow.

He had to get up early to catch the train from Stainham for London, but Iseult was up to superintend his breakfast, and to wish him good-bye. He seemed to be thinking of nothing but her face all the journey.

O'Connell's house had a shocking air of shabby-genteel squalor about it as he entered it that evening, and Mrs. O'Connell, who came with wreathed smiles to greet him, seemed more imbecile than usual.

"Where's Connie?" he asked.

She was downstairs, it appeared, and downstairs he went heavily. But to his surprise, Connie at sight of him fled to the kitchen and scullery regions, and left him to get his tea alone.

Mr. O'Connell came in shortly after, and having emitted an inarticulate growl that did duty for "Good evening," settled himself in an easy chair to smoke and glower savagely at the fireplace in silence.

Guy swallowed a cup of tea, and fled from the old fellow.

He met Connie unexpectedly on the stairs, and asked her what was the matter; but she attempted to pass him without speaking. This he prevented, and with some effort deposited a kiss upon one of her Celtic cheek-bones.

"Get out" said Connie. "I don't want you to kiss me. You didn't write to me while you were away, and you had no business to go playing cricket and such nonsense when you knew I wanted you to take me to Mrs. Gashford's party last night."

Guy lost his temper at this piece of feminine sweet reasonableness, and a violent quarrel ensued, of which Connie had much the best.

When she had abused the unfortunate youth to her heart's content she burst into tears, wailed that she wished she was dead, and that nobody loved her, and in the end made Guy implore her pardon in the most humble and contrite fashion.

But he was deeply disgusted, with the whole affair, and the conviction that he had taken a false step which would probably ruin him altogether, began to grow upon him.

A few days after another terrible row occurred on the finding by Mrs. O'Connell of Iseult's pocket-handkerchief carefully stowed away in Guy's desk. The old lady had a way of prowling about to see if anything had been left unlocked, or if not, whether her keys mightn't be of some use, which often resulted in strange discoveries. The present one delighted her beyond measure, because she had just got to the end of a bad attack of something or other, and was quite without occupation. She wept copiously for some time, and enjoyed it greatly, then she had "palpitations," which necessitated a dose of brandy, and being after this in a condition piteous to behold, she proceeded ostentatiously to exhibit herself to the family, and to reply to all questions—

"Ask me nothing—I dare not speak—I shall be better soon," with the air and tone of one on the verge of dissolution.

"I suppose pa and ma have been quarrelling about money," remarked Violet.

"Oh I don't know," replied Connie impatiently. "She looked at me just now for quite a minute, and when I asked what she was staring at, she said, 'My poor child—my poor child,' and I said 'Oh rubbish—I couldn't help it—so now she's offended with me.'"

When Guy returned from his office that evening Mrs. O'Connell, positively thirsting for the fray, drew him into an empty room, and proceeded to his great discomfiture to burst into tears. Then in answer to his dutiful inquiries, she tragically held up Iseult's pocket-handkerchief, moaning as she did so—

"My poor child—my poor child."

"Where did you get this?" demanded Guy furiously, snatching it from her. "Have you been rummaging among my things?"

This was not the kind of reception Mrs. O'Connell had prepared for. She had imagined that Guy would be abashed and crest-fallen, and that she would lecture him, and weep over him, and forgive him at last, after having had a thoroughly good time. But he stood before her shaking the handkerchief fiercely, and demanding again and again where she found it.

"My husband shall know of this," said Mrs. O'Connell. "I meant to shield you if I could, but he shall know all."

"I don't care anything about that," said Guy, not to be turned from his point. "I want to know where you found this?"

"I shall hold no further communication with you," replied Mrs. O'Connell severely. "Let me pass, please."

But the appeal to her husband was unsuccessful.

"Leave things alone ye old idiot," snarled he. "Do ye want to hunt the fellow out of the house before he's well hooked? Let Connie blow him up if she likes. She's able to do it without any of your blethering."

So Connie was appealed to, and declared war with a will. She would know all about it, or she would never speak to Guy again. She was not going to be made a fool of, not she.

But Guy was adamant. He would not explain, he would not give the handkerchief up, he would not do anything at all that was required of him; and when this became quite certain to Connie, as it did in about a week, she accused her mother of making mischief between them, and rushed into his arms. Then for a time things went smoothly, this last storm seemed to have cleared the air somewhat; but Guy had no further illusions. He saw himself yoked for life to an ill-tempered, ill-bred woman, and a sordid family. He lost interest in everything, and became gloomy and morose. Ten minutes conversation with Iseult before he had committed himself would have saved him. This he reflected bitterly was what a man brought upon himself by stepping from his own class into another which he did not understand.

He determined, though without any great hopes of success, to make a struggle for freedom, and chance threw the opportunity he required into his hands in no long time.

Connie, prompted by her father, began to throw out hints that it might, after all, be better if Guy gave up his engineering ideas, and contented himself with settling down as a country gentleman on the estate left him by his aunt. Guy at first refused to understand her dim innuendoes; and, when there could no longer be any mistake as to her meaning, he merely declined to discuss the question at all. So Connie settled down serenely to wear his resolution away by persistent teasing, and the last state of Guy was worse than the first.

After a long course of badgering, utterly worn out and sick, Guy suggested that their engagement should terminate.

Connie had been prepared for this move by her father, and, in conformity with his instructions, gave a loud shriek, and went into hysterics as strong as she could manage on the spur of the moment.

The old man, who had been listening at the keyhole, darted into the room, and stood as if transfixed with horror at the spectacle before him.

Guy was standing in one corner of the room, with his hands in his pockets, calmly watching the contortions of Connie, who was in the opposite corner.

"What's the matter?" roared O'Connell.

"I don't know," said Guy. "Perhaps Connie will tell you when she is at liberty."

"If ye've insulted her," yelled the affectionate parent, "I'll have it out of ye some way. What's the matter, darlin'?" he added, bending his lank and angular frame over his suffering daughter.

"He wants to break off our engagement," sobbed Connie; "he's tired of me already."

"What?" cried O'Connell, as if unable to believe his ears, and advancing threateningly as he spoke. "Ye blackhearted scoundrel, is this true?"

But Guy was not of the breed to endure bullying; he did not retreat before the bellicose Irishman, but he said, "Quite true," in a tranquil voice, and looked O'Connell in the face. There was a certain gleam in his eyes which made the old man retreat more hurriedly than he had advanced, grinding out injurious epithets, however, as he went.

At this moment the door flew open, and Mrs. O'Connell and Violet rushed into the room. The former at once flung herself upon her reluctant spouse, crying, "Spare him—Oh spare him;" the latter wound herself about the equally reluctant Connie, with inarticulate noises that might mean anything.

"Get out, ye old fool," screamed O'Connell, trying to disentangle himself; "what the devil are ye doin'?"

But Mrs. O'Connell refused to release him, and made the house ring with her howls.

In the midst of this most dramatic scene Guy strode out of the room, snatched his hat from the hall-table, and left the house. As the front door slammed behind him, the O'Connells, one and all, came to their senses, and stood looking foolishly at one another.

"That's the sort of muddle you confounded women make of a thing," shouted the old man furiously. "Ye ought to have your necks twisted, the lot of ye."

CHAPTER III.

WEDDING BELLS.

A MONTH had passed since the occurrences narrated in the last chapter, and Guy, sitting in his new lodgings, reflected on the course of events, and found little satisfaction therein. He had cut himself adrift from the O'Connell's, and notwithstanding all their efforts to bring about a reconciliation, adrift he remained, and steadfastly refused to hold any communication with them.

But O'Connell was even now preparing to bring an action against him for breach of promise, and Guy was horribly cornered. He confessed to himself that he was madly in love with Iseult Lynton, and that his only chance of future happiness lay in winning her, but he was perfectly well aware that she would never marry a man against whom such an action as O'Connell's had been brought and sustained, and his lawyer had advised him only a few hours before that he had practically no defence.

They had tried to buy the old man off, but he was far too cunning for anything of that kind. He scorned the base insinuation that money had anything to do with his action. In the interests of public morality, he said, men like Guy Ashton ought to be exposed. Scoundrels who disturbed the peace of happy families, and trifled with the affections of the young and innocent must not be allowed to go unpunished. He knew that mercenary motives would be imputed to him, but he did not mind that; so long as his conscience approved, so long as he knew that he was doing

his duty, he should be perfectly happy, even if the world were in arms against him.

Among many other valuable accomplishments he possessed that of being able to weep copiously on the smallest provocation, and when he reached this point in his speech he usually burst into tears, and made broken references to his poor daughter.

He claimed £8,000 damages, and he professed to believe he would get it. This, with costs and other expenses connected with the affair would effectually ruin Guy for many years to come.

"And," said Guy's lawyer, "there's no good in denying that he is likely to get heavy damages. He is a cunuing old rascal, and if I am not much mistaken, his daughter is a chip of the old block. Together they'll work up a good case no doubt. You'll be forced to appeal to your family for help."

"Never!" said Guy vehemently, "until I am clear of this one way or the other—we are strangers. I should never respect myself again if I asked them for assistance after what has passed."

"Then," said the lawyer, "why not take a trip to America? Niagara—Yo Semite Valley and so on? Very interesting country for a young man."

"What! run away?" asked Guy.

"Exactly," replied the lawyer, "I should really advise it—not as a lawyer mind, but as an old friend. I don't want this blackguard to rob you, and I see no other way of preventing it. Go and think it over."

And Guy had been thinking it over ever since. It would spoil his career of course. His project of becoming partner in the engineering firm must go by the board, and he must begin his work over again on the other side of the Atlantic. There would be no Iseult there either. It scarcely seemed worth the while to go, but then, on the other hand, it certainly seemed intolerable to stay. He was in an inextricable mess, and there was no satisfactory way out; he must merely choose the least unsatisfactory one that offered, and this was probably flight to America.

As he came to this cheerful decision there was a low knock at his door, and thinking it was his landlady, he said "Come in." To his dismay and astonishment Violet O'Connell presented herself. He did not know that the O'Connells had discovered his address: he stood looking foolishly at his visitor without speaking.

Violet's eyes were red and puffy with weeping, and she was in all respects a very dowdy and undesirable-looking young person indeed, but she was the only member of the O'Connell family for whom Guy cherished any kindly feeling, and as she had got into his room he could not be rude to her.

"Oh, Guy—at least I mean Mr. Ashton, or just which you think best," burst out the afflicted damsel, "Connie's so ill—dying we think—and she keeps asking for you. They've treated you badly I know, but will you come just for a minute? The doctor thinks it might ease her mind. You needn't see anybody but Connie and I—that is, me. I think she's sorry she quarrelled with you, and I'm sure pa is."

"I am sorry your sister is ill," replied Guy, stiffly, "but I can't see what good my seeing her

will do. It appears to me it will awaken very unpleasant recollections in both of us."

"Ah, it's cruel of you to talk so, Ashton—Mr. Guy—I beg your pardon," cried Violet. "The doctor gives very little hope of her. It was he who suggested you should be sent for. Will you refuse the very last kindness you will ever be able to do for her?"

This was from Guy's point of view a more cheerful way of looking at it, and besides he had a sneaking kindness for the good-hearted muddle-headed Violet in her affliction; so, acting as we probably do in most cases from a mixture of good motives and bad, he went.

As Violet had promised, he saw no one on his way to the chamber, but he fancied O'Connell and his wife were behind convenient keyholes chuckling at the success of their manoeuvre. This suspicion faded away as he entered the room. It was clear that Connie's illness was no sham. Her dark eyes were unnaturally bright, an angry spot of fever burned on either cheek, her black hair was tossed and tumbled upon the pillow. She was talking rapidly and half incoherently.

A great wave of remorse swept over Guy's mind as he saw her. Something within him said "This is your work," and he could not gainsay it. She did not recognize him, but continued to talk, and he could distinguish phrases here and there, which served to make his anguish more acute.

"My darling . . . so long since I saw you . . . I loved you all the while though we quarrelled . . . you were hard, dearest, very hard . . . O, Pat, Pat, my heart is broken!"

"Who is Pat?" asked Guy, struggling to repress his emotion.

"Our cousin Patrick O'Dowd," replied Violet. "He came home from sea last week after a long absence, and now she seems to do nothing but tell him of her trouble."

"Dear Pat," she began again, "you will save me, won't you? Tell him—tell him all about it. He isn't really bad—they have worried him—they worry everybody," and then with a sudden change of tone and manner, "but I shall die—it doesn't matter—leave him alone."

Guy took her hand and spoke to her, but she stared at him vacantly, and then said in a hoarse whisper, "Where's Guy? I want to see him—send him here."

"I am Guy," he replied, "have you anything to say to me?"

"I want to tell him," she went on, "that it was not his fault. . . . but. . . . but there are thousands of stairs to climb—thousands upon thousands," she reiterated wearily, "I shall never get to the top."

Guy could endure no more, he murmured that he would call again the following day, and fled from the house. His remorse was terrible, if the girl died he was her murderer. He had not thought she cared anything about him, but then he knew nothing about women. In a sudden access of passionate self-reproach he knelt by the side of his bed when he again reached his lodgings, and swore that if God would spare her life, he would marry her and be kind to her till death.

Having once started upon this way of looking at the question he soon managed to lash himself nearly into a fever at the thought of his own brutality. It seemed to him now that her only

fault had been shyness, while he had all along been dreadfully violent and impatient.

He spent the night in pacing wildly about his room, and in praying vehemently for her recovery; and towards morning having utterly exhausted himself he fell asleep on his knees.

He called on O'Connell as early as he decently could do so that day, and told him of the decision he had come to. The old man fell on his neck and wept.

"Allow me to apologize to ye for all that has past," he exclaimed, "ye weren't to blame—ye weren't to blame at all. And Connie wasn't to blame either. It was her foolish loving old father. I advised her to say what she said—but I'll interfere no more—and I consider ye a noble character."

Mrs. O'Connell's greeting was even more effusive, and she persisted in kissing Guy upon both cheeks, a sudden and unpleasant performance enough—but it all seemed to be part of his expiation, and as such he endured it. After this he called every day, and when Connie began to recover he was allowed to go and speak to her a little, and to hold her passive hand for a few minutes.

She seemed at first, he thought, only puzzled and troubled at his appearance, but after a time she took it as a matter of course, and did not express any feeling on the subject whatever. When her health was somewhat re-established the state of things was explained to her, and Guy at her feet, abased himself with lyric raptures of self-accusation. To his disappointment she only nodded and was silent.

"Are you glad or sorry?" he asked in despair.

"Oh, glad I suppose," she replied, "but you will talk loud, and make my head ache. Please go now."

When she was well enough to travel, she went with Violet for companion to Portsmouth, where the O'Dowds lived, to complete her recovery, and it was arranged that the marriage should take place there as soon as she was quite restored to health. The O'Connells did not mean to run any more risks of missing their man, and as for Guy, he had no more fight in him. He surrendered everything without a struggle, his engineering projects with the rest, and went off to prepare his house near Durham for the reception of his bride. He had been badly beaten, and was thoroughly cowed. He had no other feeling at present than one of intense relief at having escaped a life-long remorse. Of insult he could not bear to think, he hoped she had forgotten all about him, he wished he could forget all about her. When she heard what was going to happen, what would she say? He shuddered at the bare idea, and could only find comfort in the reflection that she might very probably never hear of it at all.

All things at length being ready, even to the license, and Connie herself more robust than ever, the day was fixed for the wedding, and Guy journeyed down to Portsmouth the day before quite alone. He would not ask any of his friends to be present, and so Pat O'Dowd was to be his best man. It was raining hard, and he had a wretched journey. He tried to read, but could not; he tried to smoke, but his best cigars had no charm for him; he could only sit and stare out of the streaming window at the drowning landscape, and

listen to the angry rattle of the rain on the carriage roof.

Pat O'Dowd was at the station to meet him; a big, cheery young sailor, with a wicked twinkle in his eye—who haled him off first to the hotel where he was to stay for the night, and then to his father's house. Here Guy found, besides the O'Dowds, the entire O'Connell family, and there was a solemn dinner in his honour that evening. It was not a success, because nothing was cooked, not even the goose—"But yours will be tomorrow, old fellow," cried Pat)—and because O'Dowd and O'Connell would make long speeches, but it was got over somehow, and late in the evening Guy found himself alone with Connie. He kissed her affectionately, as in duty bound, but she seemed impassive and cold.

"Are you not pleased to see me after all this long time?" he said rather reproachfully.

"Yes; I am pleased," she replied, looking at the carpet.

"You manage to conceal your feelings very well, then," remarked Guy lightly.

"That is very true," she said in a low voice.

"I hope you'll like the house," Guy went on, with an effort to seem cheerful. "I have consulted your taste in everything. There is to be a footman in livery, and there are two grand pianos. If you are not satisfied, I shall consider you very hard to please."

"Oh, I am sure to be satisfied," she replied.

"Why do you stare at the carpet?" he asked.

"I don't; do I?" she asked. "I am very sorry. I won't do it again." And she directed her vacant glance towards the ceiling; and then ensued five minutes of solid silence.

"Well, it is getting late, and I don't want to be locked out," said Guy, rising. "I suppose I shall see you at the church at eleven o'clock to-morrow."

"At eleven o'clock," she echoed, and their eyes met for the first time. For the first time, too, Connie showed a trace of feeling, as she observed his pained and sorrowful face. "Good bye," she said, "don't mind me now; I shall be all right to-morrow. Good-bye," and she absolutely kissed him without being asked to do so.

"After all, she has got some affection for me," reflected poor Guy, as he departed. "We may be happy yet; who knows?"

Pat would see him to his hotel, though Guy would rather have been alone. The sailor was in uproarious spirits, and made small jokes and laughed at them incessantly. Guy, in no jovial mood, was glad to bid him "Good-night" on the steps of the hotel. His last words were, "I shall have to go down to the ship after breakfast. I'm sure to be back in plenty of time; but if I'm not here to the minute, you'll find me waiting for you at the church. Good night."

Guy climbed to the top of the house to his bedroom, but he had no desire to go to bed. He spent the greater part of the night in walking to and fro in weary restlessness; he heard the rain sluicing the windows, and rushing down the leaden gutter-pipes outside; sometimes the wind awoke, and drove the rain-drops against the glass like a volley of shot, with a strenuous sound, as though to wake him to a sense of his position, and then, finding it useless, went wailing away down the night, and gave him up.

Towards morning he slept, and when he woke the storm was over and the sun was shining. It was late, too, and he had a more elaborate toilet than usual to perform, so that it was past ten before he got down to breakfast. However, he was quite ready by twenty minutes to eleven, and then, as Pat had not turned up, he made his way to the church alone. Two elderly ladies, attracted by the gorgeousness of his apparel, followed him, and entered after him to see the fun. A bandy-legged old man, dressed in rusty black, came to meet him, and looked at his watch.

"You the gentleman for eleven o'clock?" he asked.

Guy answered that he believed so.

"Nobody here," remarked the old man; "but there's ten minutes yet. Ladies is always late. The reverend gentleman, he's in the vestry, he is. He'll be ready when you are."

Guy looked round him drearily. The elderly ladies were filling up the spare time by reading the epitaphs upon the walls. A splash of crimson fell upon the altar from a painted window, like a splash of blood. Two street arabs came to the door and peeped in, but fled at the approach of the old man in rusty black. From the street outside came the noise of wheels and the voices of passers-by. Then the church clock struck eleven, and Guy started and looked at his watch, and the old man did the same.

"Do you think they'll be long?" asked he. "We've got another wedding at the half-hour. I hope they'll be punctual."

"They promised to be here at least five minutes before the time," replied Guy; "something must have happened."

The elderly ladies had got tired of the epitaphs, and had taken comfortable seats where they thought a good view would be obtainable. The "reverend gentleman" came to the vestry door, smoothing his surplice, and looked out. To him toddled the old man, and they whispered together.

Guy was neither annoyed nor anxious; he knew Connie was always late, and he was in no hurry.

Ten minutes more passed, and then the old man once again interviewed Guy.

"If they're not here in five minutes," he said, "we must put it off till another day. You'd better send one of them boys to see if anything's up."

Guy despatched one of the street arabs to O'Dowd's house, and sat down to wait. The elderly ladies were beginning to get fidgetty, but he was not. "It will get done all the same," he thought. The splash of crimson had moved a little; it looked as if some of the blood were trickling down the side of the altar now. He smiled grimly at the sacrificial turn of his fancy.

Suddenly a cab pulled up at the church door.

"Here they are at last," said the old man, "and about time, too."

But the only person who appeared was old O'Dowd, who came rushing down the aisle like a madman.

"Gone!" he cried. "Gone—clean gone!"

"What do you mean?" asked Guy, catching some of his excitement. "Who's gone?"

"Connie and Pat," howled O'Dowd. "They were married at half-past ten at another church,

and they're half-way to London by this time, and O'Connell's having fits in my house at the rate of two every five minutes."

Guy turned to the verger with a radiant face "There's a sovereign for you," he said, "Go and drink my health, and you can have this license too, my man."

He went joyfully out of the church, and from that day to this he has never set eyes upon any member of the O'Connell family. At his hotel he found a letter addressed to him in Connie's handwriting. It had been left half an hour before by a railway porter. It was brief, but to the point.

"My cousin and I," it ran, "were secretly engaged when we were little more than children. We quarrelled badly, and he went to sea. I thought I had left off caring for him, till I saw him again. I had no wish to deceive you, but while I was ill you had managed to deceive yourself so completely that I saw it would take a great deal of trouble to put you right, and then there would have been scenes at home. It is best as it is; we never cared for each other, and should never have been happy."

"There's a lot of common sense about that girl," said Guy as he folded the letter again, "I admire her more at this moment than I ever imagined I could. I would send her a handsome present if I knew her address."

After ordering a lordly lunch, and disposing of it with great gusto, Guy took train to London, where his first business was to call at the office he had so lately left, to see if haply he could reinstate himself upon the old terms. Fortunately this was not difficult, and then a positive passion for work seized him. For two years he toiled fiercely and ceaselessly; at the end of that time he entered the firm as junior partner, and afterwards his rise in his profession was rapid.

One day being called upon to give evidence before a Parliamentary Committee he recognized in one of the committeemen his friend Jack Lynton, and they dined together in the evening. Inquiries as to Iscault elicited the information that she had refused two good offers, and that her brother thought she was mad.

Guy pondered over this intelligence for two days and then without saying a word to anybody, packed his portmanteau, not forgetting to place therein a lady's handkerchief discoloured by an ancient blood stain, and posted off to the Grange. Miss Lynton was at home, and he was shown into her boudoir.

That is all that is known by outsiders, except that when they both came out of the boudoir half an hour after they were engaged to be married. It was many years afterwards that Iscault owned to Guy in strict confidence that she lost her heart at a cricket match. Sir Slingsby Ashton, delighted beyond measure at the turn things had taken, came down handsomely; Squire Lynton not to be outdone, did the same, and when the marriage was celebrated an ox was roasted whole, and the bold peasantry, their country's pride, were intoxicated to a man.



"WANTED A SECRETARY."

BY WALTER RICHARDS.

If it were wanted to give to an essay on this subject an appearance of orthodox gravity and ponderousness, there might be added by way of explanatory title, "Glimpses into the Genesis of Joint Stock Companies." There are, doubtless, many cases to which this second title would not apply. It would only reach rarely, and by accident, the really "snug berths" that are occasionally advertised; the benevolent gentlemen who requires an assistant in his works of charity, good handwriting, humanitarian views, and total abstinence absolutely essential; the Mrs. Jellaby of the day, whose unfortunate assistant is required to know all the dead and most of the living languages, and to be able to give points to the Registrar General in the matter of statistics; the literary and professional gentleman whose arduous avocations render it necessary for him to employ a secretary of pleasing manners; all these must be excluded. The literary and professional gentleman might, it is true, claim a species of kinship with the enterprising corporations referred to: his secretary of pleasing manners is generally supposed to be an adept at the soft answer which will turn away the wrath of importunate creditors, and to be qualified—minus the necessity of travelling—for the whole duties of an ambassador as defined by honest old Wotton. Interesting and naive as some of these ingenuous requirements are, their advertisement is of much rarer occurrence than is that of the company which requires the services of a secretary. The salary is large, the duties invariably "gentlemanly," the hours suspiciously easy. For the trifling investment of five hundred or a thousand pounds in the shares of the Company a cloudless vista of *otium cum dignitate* is opened before intending applicants. Of the success of the Company there can be no doubt. This is an invariable fact, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the result proves the strict accuracy of the assertion, though superficial observers might think on first hearing it meant rather the opposite. "The Vraisemblian Blue Cattle Horn Company, Limited," for instance, in its very nomenclature commands confidence. The profits, averaging rather over than under five hundred per cent., are proved with an exactitude which is really amusing in its simplicity. The king, or other potentate, of Vraisemblia will positively pay any one who is kind enough to relieve him of the Blue Horns which are lying about in myriads: here, as is well-known, they are worth considerably more than their weight in bank-notes. Who would not invest in such a company? Who would not jump like the veriest acrobat at the chance of becoming its secretary?

The large-souled philanthropists who, with a selfless devotion to the welfare of humanity, have promulgated this scheme, have given another proof of their unquenchable benevolence in thus throwing open, as it were, this valuable post to public competition. What chances of benefiting their own families or acquaintances do they stoically abandon; what a captivating sense of their duty to the shareholders do they show by insisting that the secretary must "take an interest in the

undertaking." Is there not all the difference between virtue and vice in their dignified action, and the proceedings so often described in the squalid atmosphere of the Police Courts, and known to the unimaginative Police as the "Confidence trick?" And so, doubtless, in some cases there is. The investment is a fair speculation; the aspiring official knows what he is doing, is treated fairly, and in the event of success benefits accordingly. But sometimes the luxuriant imagination of the philanthropic projectors betrays them, and, of course, quite accidentally, the too confiding secretary into a false position. When the latter has paid his money and received the shares of such vast potential value, he is told that his active services will not be required for about a fortnight, by which time the offices of the Company—"rather more suitable for such a business as ours will be, my dear sir," observes the managing director with a genial smile—will be ready. It is wonderful how entirely that managing director is the incarnate embodiment of the Company to the outer world. The baronet, the merchant, the retired occupant of a hitherto unheard-of Colonial post (possibly chosen, by the way, on account of its proximity to Vraisemblia itself), the unattached clergyman who throws the *segis* of his cloth over the morality of this stupendous enterprise—none of these whose names figure on the prospectus are ever seen: they have evidently entire confidence in their "colleague," the managing director, whose affable manners, frank smile, and portly, substantial presence go far to show that it is not ill placed. And so for a fortnight our secretary is on leave; perhaps, in anticipation of the snug little income he has insured, he takes his wife away for a few days to the sea-side, where many are the pleasant castles in the air that are built, having their sure foundation on the famous blue horns of Vraisemblia. He carries himself because he feels as one who has a certain definite position; he affects—quite unconsciously—a certain air of knowledge and due reticence on commercial subjects, when such come on the *tapis* of conversation; man though he is, he feels as pleased and excited as his proud, happy wife, when a morning's paper contains an advertisement of the Company with his name figuring as secretary.

It is well they should enjoy their holiday, for next year and for years after, may be, they will not have such another. It will not run to it, he will ruefully confess; the Secretaryship has fallen through, and the shares—our Secretary is not, perhaps, without a sense of humour—make a tasteful sort of *memento mori* pasted on to his screen. Nothing certainly could have been more encouraging than the general appearance of things on his return to the new offices. They certainly were imposing; they were well situated, and furnished substantially, and even, as Mr. Pickwick would have said, with some pretension to a little elegance besides. As for the books, they were faultless, their virgin pages auspiciously white and numerous, their binding a poem in brass and leather. A favourite theme with novelists is the mysterious attraction which draws together parent and child though unknown to each other in that capacity. Something perhaps of this sort may have accounted for the pride, approaching affection, which our secretary from the

very first felt for those books and, indeed, for all the surroundings of his "great place." Little thought he that he might with no unwarranted assurance have asserted as he gazed around *Solus feci*. Yet so it was; books, furniture, offices, advertisements, not to mention sundry "compliments" to the baronet, merchant, divine, and retired Vraisemblian official were alike provided by his "interest in the Company." Even the really charming stationery, with its quaint device of blue horns and Vraisemblian hunters, owed its purchase, though not the brilliant conception which adorned it, to the same timely subscription. The countless applications which he was assured had been received emanated from men of straw; the "responsible" directors by one of those unfortunate coincidences which do sometimes occur were one and all just then in pecuniary difficulties—the retired official being indeed, so hard pressed as to "borrow a trifle" from our bewildered friend; and, saddest mischance of all, the managing director had been summoned to the death bed of an aged relative who resided—probably "for this occasion only"—in an inaccessible town somewhere in the Pyrenees.

Professional opinion consulted by the frantic secretary is clear that no *legal* fraud has been committed, and so the incident ends, the castles in the air ruthlessly demolished, the pleasant plans rendered impossible, and for some time at least instead of the wine of life he has to be content with the smallest beer.

It is to be hoped that things come right again, and that our friend and the sadly disappointed little wife may find that particular woe serve for sweet discourses in their time to come; but we may be pretty sure that any "discourses" held with a stranger will be remarkable for the strength and vigour of their language, should the latter incautiously start the theme of "Wanted a Secretary."

WILD FLOWERS.

HOW coil your tendrils round the heart,
Meek denizens of field and grove!
And weave a jess no strain may part,
Reclaiming Memory, should she rove;
Then bind her closer to our side
As deeper glooms life's Eventide.

Remembrancers of deathless days
When childhood roamed 'neath cloudless skies,
And lisped your legendary lays
Or sought in you its destinies,
As eagerly adown the gale
It marked your downy petals sail.

Your tints revive fast fading dreams
When ye were love's ambassadors,
To plead his cause by sedgy streams,
Moist meads, or woodland corridors.
What time the boy in maiden's tress
Enwove your dewy loveliness.

E'en with crushed forms and pallid dyes
You've spells to furnish eyes waxed dim,
Till they behold that home which lies
Beyond wide ocean's purple rim;
With many a spot the heart reveres,
Tho' sadly blurred by exile tears.

Your breath dispels the mists of Time
That roll betwixt us and the years;
You soothe, as doth a drowsy chime
That wanders into dying ears
Thro' open casement, mingling sweet
With songs of childhood in the street.

By dusty wayside, moorland bleak,
Waste whistling marsh, grey dreary fen,
Dim crouching dell, stark mountain peak,
Ye kiss the feet of weary men,
And gladden like home melodies
By wanderers heard 'neath alien skies.

A comely modesty your dower,
That languisheth amidst the glare
And blazonry of courtly bower,
Of stiff brocade and jewels rare;
But grace homes precincts, and endear
Their pure and tranquil atmosphere.

Apostles of a lowly creed!
You bid us stint our eager quest
Of wealth, or rule, or honour's meed
And learn "in blessing to be blest:"
Unmarked, save by our Master's eye,
Content amidst obscurity.

E. V. R.

THE FAMILY SCAPEGRACE.

BY J. E. PANTON.

HE was such a bright-eyed daring little fellow in his petticoat days, that it was almost impossible to believe that no witch had been at work when the pretty boy developed without rhyme or reason into the family scapegrace.

At first we could not credit the story of half his pranks, and thinking it wrong almost to appear to doubt the open-hearted child, whose one fault, it seemed to us, was his outspokenness, we took no notice of the many hints dropped by his exemplary younger brother, and redoubling our affection, and our watchful care over him, contented ourselves with a moral supervision, and, alas! soon came to the conclusion that there was more in his behaviour than we could quite understand from our point of view, and that, after all, Ernest was not wrong when he remarked, that we did not know half the wickedness that he was up to.

We had sent him to school early, because we dreaded to spoil him ourselves; and although he had cried terribly and implored us to listen to him, and believe him, when he told us of all the cruelties and privations he had to endure, we hardened our hearts, remembering that we ourselves had undergone equal sufferings, the recollection of which had much helped to prepare us for our battle with life. And although we had had our doubts as to whether we should not have been happier and less wordily-minded had we never been subjected to this same process of rough polishing off all the originalities in our own minds, we were not sufficiently in advance of our age, to see what home training would do, and so resolved not to listen to the story of what was only the inevitable fate of all schoolboys, and contenting ourselves with telling him that school was to prepare him to live in a far harder world, we sent

him off to his second term of imprisonment, silencing our conscience by saying he was only undergoing what every other man in England had had to undergo in his time.

When he returned once more, we heard no murmurs against his fate, there was a nameless change in the child, he was no longer complaining and tearful, and we congratulated ourselves on our firmness, and thought how wise we had been, when he ran joyfully down to the cab that came to take him back, when the holidays were over, scarcely saying good-bye to his mother and little sisters, who began to cry of course, though we overheard them saying they were thankful he was gone, for now they would be able to bring their cherished toys once more out of their hiding-places. Presently rumours began to reach us from his school : he was too daring and defiant of anything like rule ; the boys adored him, and he could lead them anywhere ; punishment only seemed to harden him ; and then finally came one horrible letter requesting us to remove him elsewhere, for he had led a regular army of his school-fellows against a neighbouring farmer, who had cruelly ill-treated a dog belonging to the school, that had been found trespassing on his land, and so terrified him and his household, that he had ridden off for help from the town hard-by, and the ringleaders had been brought before the bench, and severely censured in a manner that bid fair to do great damage to the school, and that therefore must not possibly be repeated.

Some one said that the crime was, after all, a noble one ; and, looking back now, we are almost constrained to agree with them. But discipline must be maintained. Our next-door neighbour's son had taken a scholarship triumphantly and so we packed him off to the strictest private tutor we could hear of, refusing to listen to his side of the story, and his description of the dear dog, and the horrible cruelties the wretch had made him suffer.

From the private tutor's he once more wrote us an indignant protest against his life. He found himself, he said, in a species of high-class reformatory ; each of his companions had been sent there after some disgraceful school *fracas* ; and he declared, that if he were forced to stay among such riff-raff, he would not be able to answer for the consequences. But, as he ended by telling us that the tutor was generally drunk, and that the tutor's wife could only be kept decently civil by a judicious stream of small presents and little attentions from the pupils, once more we refused to credit his statements ; and writing back, that if the other pupils had been sent away from school, he himself had suffered the same indignity, we stopped the flow of his eloquence, and never heard again any complaint from his lips until the time came for him to choose a profession, when he begged wildly for a berth in the army or navy, failing which he implored to be allowed to go to the colonies, or even to become a farmer.

But we had not worked up our own business to the height we had to discover our sons too untrained and undisciplined to work as we had done at our desk in Mincing Lane ; and, regardless of his wild asseverations that he should go mad, or else rob a till, we showed him his place in the office, and trusted that time and a due acquaintance with the ledgers would prove him wrong and ourselves in the right once more.

But, unfortunately, he was now too old to be coerced, as we had coerced the curly-headed child. His open face had completely changed during his career at the Rev. Walter Lozfoyle's ; and, after six months at the office, we ourselves could hardly believe the scowling, discontented youth was the boy whose pretty face still drew delighted smiles from his mother's friends, when he forgot the office and his bondage for a few minutes at a party at their houses or at his own home. And, indeed, if he had been allowed a little more relaxation, perhaps things might have been different. But we really could not be inundated night after night with his friends, making love to our girls, drinking our sherry and soda-water, and knocking our billiard-balls about ; to say nothing of their all wanting to smoke. And, expressing great surprise that he could not be content with his books or a newspaper as we were, we positively forbade these incursions of barbarians ; and, regardless of the girls' sulks and his jeers, we declared discipline must be maintained, and that we must have peace and quiet in the evening, for we, at all events, were tired with the day's work, and were getting old.

We must pass lightly now to the end, which came not very long ago.

One day he was absent from his desk, and we solemnly crossed his name from the family Bible, because a hundred pounds were missing from the till ; and in their place was a letter to say the scapegrace had taken the money, and would return it as soon as he possibly could, while we put Ernest on his stool, and proceeded to forget our scapegrace as soon as we conveniently could. His name was never mentioned ; and if sometimes on a wet, windy night, his mother's eyes filled with tears, and she looked apprehensively at the window, no words passed, and he was to us as if had been long dead. After a lapse of years, a note came from him enclosing the money, and asking us to forgive him for the sake of his wife and boy. But we made up our minds that he had once more disgraced us by marrying beneath him, else would his marriage have been duly chronicled in the *Times* ; and, following Ernest's advice, we merely sent a formal receipt to the Scottish address he had furnished us with, on the "firm" paper, and took no notice at all of any other portion of his letter.

Then came one day to us a telegram. The scapegrace was dying and must see us once more. Ernest suggested that it was a plot to saddle us with his wife and child ; but his mother would not listen, and we set off to find the scapegrace of the family dead, and his wife closing the eyes into which we should never look again.

Ernest was right. The wife was the daughter of a farmer and as poor as a church mouse, and not a bit of a lady either ; for when, after the funeral, attended by all the countryside, we offered to take the boy home and bring him up in his father's place, she indignantly refused our offer ; and told us that she would sooner see him lying in the dreary Scotch kirkyard with his father than be taught as he was to trample affection and home-ties under foot, and to carry through life a heart well-nigh starved to death for lack of sufficient nourishment for its tender hopes and desires.

Sometimes now, when we recollect his face as it lay on the pillow in the coffin, we wonder if we were quite right in our scheme of education. But

then we think of Ernest—neat, sharp, cool, calculating Ernest, who married an old woman with £4,000 a-year as cheerfully as most men wed their first loves, and whose perfect conduct to her is the admiration of all our circle—and we cannot believe that we were wrong. Still Ernest was always exemplary; and a different handling, perhaps, than the one that suited him, might have deprived us of the shame of possessing a grandchild, who will never know us, and the memory of the crossed-out name in the Bible (that Ernest keeps now as future head of the family) which is all that remains to remind us of the Family Scapegrace.

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IN SHALLOW WATERS.

BY A. ARMITT,

Author of "The Garden at Monkholme."

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PART III.—*continued.*

—————
FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"THAT IS NOT MY FATHER!"

THE next morning a message came for Miss Dilworth, to the effect that the gentleman was better, and would be glad to see her in the afternoon.

When, after lunch was over, she walked to the Red Cow, she found him sitting up in an easy chair, looking pale, certainly, but very different from the sick man of the night before. He greeted her with a subdued smile.

"I knew I should soon be very much better—or worse," he said to her; "to-morrow I shall be as well as ever, I daresay."

"I hope you will, indeed," said Kate, and she glanced at some papers lying on the table beside him. He had been looking at them when she entered, and had drawn them hastily together.

"You have not been trying to write, have you?" she asked.

"Yes, I have; but I must leave it till to-morrow."

"Can I do it for you? You will have letters to send to friends who are anxious to hear from you."

"I have no letters to send, no friends who are anxious to hear."

"How dreadful to be so lonely!"

"I am used to it."

"But you were writing something," she persisted.

"Yes, it was a paper which I promised to a geographical society. I have the notes for it here, but I cannot go on."

"Can't I do it for you?" said Kate quickly; "you might dictate to me."

He smiled at her evident eagerness.

"You don't know how dull it is; it would weary you."

"It wouldn't indeed; I am very much interested in geography."

"This is not exactly geography; it is on the habits of some animals."

"I am interested in natural history too, very much indeed. Oh, let me do it!"

"Very well, you can try."

He pushed the pen and ink towards her, and a blank sheet of paper, the written ones he kept in his hand.

She sat down and began to write at his dictation, working carefully and diligently, but evidently the sick man did his part with an effort. His notes were rough ones, and he was unused to composing aloud, or even in the presence of any one else; for this part of his work was the one least congenial to him, and had been adopted somewhat late in life, after his exploring expeditions had reached the ears of some members of a learned society, and induced them to appeal to him for contributions.

Kate noticed the air of weariness and effort with which he put his sentences together, and after a time she laid down her pen, saying softly—

"I am not tired, but you are."

"A little, but it can't be helped. Good or bad this paper must be sent away this week. I am much obliged to you for making it possible."

"But couldn't you give me the *rough notes*?" said Kate, boldly, "and I would put them together and bring them back to you. I have practised composition a little, and it would be easier for you to correct and alter than to dictate it all. I would imitate your style as closely as ever I could."

He looked at her thoughtfully, and answered—

"You shall try it if you like. But I will dictate the notes instead of handing them to you. That will take a very short time; and I can give you the facts in the right order. Then you can put them into what words you like. So long as it all reads correctly and in a straightforward manner, it will be enough."

On this new system the work was soon finished, and Kate carried off her raw material in triumph. Her task was simple enough. It was merely to supply the necessary auxiliaries to the verbs, and articles to the nouns; to put pronouns where they were required, and to round the sentences neatly. For example: "habits social, colonies 20 to 30," could be transformed to "Their habits are social, and they live in colonies numbering twenty or thirty individuals."

She was, nevertheless, excited by the importance of the undertaking. She shut herself up in her own room, studied White's *Selborne* for an hour to see how the thing could be done in the highest style, and then set conscientiously to work. She wrote the paper several times over before she finished it to her satisfaction, and she was so much absorbed in her task that she resented interruption, and positively declined to go out riding the next morning with Jack.

"What a thing it is to become all at once a distinguished scientific writer!" he remarked sarcastically. "I suppose that henceforth an ignorant person like myself will hardly ever be admitted to your learned society?"

"You may come with me this very afternoon if you like, when I take the paper back."

"I wouldn't for the world intrude on that great zoological interview," he retorted, "but if you can tell me when it's likely to end, I will call for you, and bring you home afterwards."

Kate set out that afternoon in high spirits for the Red Cow, with her precious manuscript in her hand.

She found Henry Dilworth walking about the garden, waiting for her with an eagerness almost as great as her own, though the cause was different.

"I hope it will do," she said, as they went in together, and she put her manuscript in his hands.

When they reached the parlour, he opened the packet and turned the papers over, while she watched him anxiously. He appeared to be looking at the writing rather than at the composition, and indeed the carefully formed letters, like those which had come to him in Australia from his "dutiful daughter Katie," were more interesting to him than the words about zoological facts.

"Will you read it to me?" he said, giving the manuscript back to her. Then he sat down on the other side of the table, and shaded his face from her view with his hand.

She began to read, at first with a nervously trembling voice, but afterwards clearly and well. It disappointed her to notice that he evidently followed her with difficulty, as if his thoughts were elsewhere. Once or twice he fell into a fit of abstraction, and had to ask her to read a portion over again. He was particular, however, in his corrections, and several statements which she had misunderstood he put in their right form.

When she had finished he expressed his approbation warmly.

"I couldn't have done it nearly so well myself," he said.

Her face flushed with pleasure at the praise.

"I am so glad you like it," she answered, "I tried to do my best; but it was new to me. I daresay I might improve."

"You have done very well indeed," he said, smiling and turning the papers over in his fingers again, "this is better than making jelly."

"I tried to do it well," she said, in a low, pleased voice, "because it is what I have thought—what I have always wished to do for my father."

"For your father?"

He put the papers down on the table, and she noticed that the thin but powerful hand which held them was trembling.

"Yes, my father is very clever. He finds out many things of this sort, and I have always thought I might help him in writing about them."

"Then you have thought about your father?"

"Could I do anything else?" she asked.

"You have thoughts of being with him, of working for him?"

She looked at him with a proud surprise.

"My great hope is that he may let me help him some day; my great pride is that I belong to him whether he wants my help or not. You do not know my father."

"Do you know him yourself—Kate?"

He spoke in a voice low and hoarse with emotion, and leaned over the table towards her.

"Sir?" she said, a vague trouble in her face, as she drew back little. "I don't understand you."

"Dear child, dear daughter Kate, don't you know me?"

She flushed to the roots of her hair, and then turned pale, and rose trembling to her feet.

"I don't understand you," she said, "What does it mean? Oh—Jack!"

For Jack had passed the window at the moment, and she heard his step in the passage. As he came in she turned to him with a breathless appeal.

"Jack," she said, "it isn't true! That isn't my father?"

Henry Dilworth had risen when she rose; he sat down now suddenly as if some one had struck him a heavy blow, and he put one hand before his eyes.

"It is enough," he said, in a quiet voice, which was heard distinctly enough in the silence, "she thinks I could tell her a lie."

There was a pause, as in the moment after a great catastrophe. Kate was stupefied by bewilderment, surprise, and disappointment. *That* was her father then, the man whom she had patronized and condescended to be kind to; whom she had mistaken for someone in a different sphere, to whom her friendship had seemed a privilege, her visits an honour. *That* was her father, whom she must love and live for. She had liked this old man, and been interested in him, but she was seized with a shocked reluctance at the revelation of their close relationship.

What Henry Dilworth thought there is not any need to say.

Jack had not spoken. Kate knew from his silence that it must be true. She understood all at once why the doctor had brought here, and her aunt had permitted her to come. She stood there speechless and petrified; the shock of her own emotion rendered her blind or indifferent to the emotion of others. At last Henry Dilworth took his hand away from his face and spoke quietly.

"Dear child," he said, "I did not mean to shock or startle you. That was why I waited; that was why I thought of going away without telling you at all. But the time seemed to have come; and you said you wished to be with me—that was because you did not know me. It is not your fault. It is only as—I thought it might be."

"Kate," said Jack, when there had been a moment's pause, and she did not speak, "why don't you wake up? Are you made of stone? And this," he added, with a gesture of contemptuous anger, "is the woman I tried to teach to love me! She has no love in her."

"Hush!" said Henry Dilworth, quickly, "don't speak harshly to her. Don't you see that it is all unintentional—and therefore sincere. Dear child, do not be afraid; come round here and look at me. How cold your hands are! You had been hoping and believing something very different. The truth is like that often, Kate; not what we hope, not what we wish, but the truth, and we must face it. It is not your fault. You thought of me, you loved me when I was a long way off; you will love me again perhaps in the same way. But for myself, dear child, I love you better for having seen you. You have done your best, you have tried to be good, and I shall remember it all. I shall never blame you; don't think it. And I do not ask you to forgive me for the trouble I have brought into your life, because it is not my will that God, having given me a daughter like you,

has not given to her such a father as she would have. You will think of that afterwards. I am glad you were good and kind to me—before you knew. You will be glad too. Did I not tell you the night before last, that it was perhaps enough for a life-time? No one shall ever hear me say that it was not enough. Now, Mr. Langford—Jack—will you take her home?"

She had stood looking at him in a stupid bewilderment while he held her hands and spoke to her gently. Now, when he let them go, she turned to Jack with a troubled face.

"I am sorry—if I have done wrong."

"Do right then," was the brief reply.

She turned to Henry Dilworth and looked at him wistfully, hesitatingly; some softer feeling stirred within her, and struggled against the shy reluctance, the proud shrinking that she had from any familiar kindness—a touch or a caress—to a stranger.

His eyes met hers, with a look in which there was not any reproach.

"Good-bye, dear child," he said, "you will go home now."

"Good-bye," she said, moving slowly away, and murmuring again, "I am sorry—"

She paused near the door and looked round with a doubtful, troubled face, as if dissatisfied at this strange ending of a strange interview.

He smiled and put out his hand in answer to her look; speaking softly and suddenly.

"Kiss me, Kate, before you go."

Her eyes dilated, as if with a return of the first surprise. She went forward in a mechanical obedience, but before she reached him she dropped her head on her hands and burst into a passion of tears.

"Not now," she said, "to-morrow; I will do it to-morrow."

Henry Dilworth's hand fell again on his knee; those tears of Kate, the first he had seen her shed since she was a child, and drawn from her by the mere thought of giving him that tenderness for which he had longed so much, struck him a second cruel blow where the first had been enough. His hands trembled, but he kept his voice steady, and spoke as quietly as before.

"Yes, to-morrow; to-morrow will be the best. Now, sir, will you take her away at once."

His voice was that of a man with whom there must be no more trifling. Jack, who had said nothing for fear of making a bad matter worse, took Kate's arm and led her from the room.

When they were gone, and the door shut, Henry Dilworth folded his arms on the table and put his head down on them silently. He felt like a man who has been sorely stricken and who has not a word to utter in protest.

CHAPTER IX.

REPENTANCE.

In silence Kate and Jack walked the greater part of the way back to the Stepping Stones. Kate's mind was in a tumult of mingled disappointment and remorse. Her own first impression of astonishment, incredulity, dismay, still was uppermost in her sensations; but dimly under her youthful

wayward impulse of resistance, there was the consciousness of a suffering greater than her own, and the perception of a nature, beside which her own capricious identity seemed a trifling thing. It was possible that the grief which she had created, and then ignored, was as large as the patience with which it had been endured; and her own disappointment was, on the contrary, as mean and as shallow as her temper had proved itself to be unreliable in the moment of trial. Was it possible that she, who had so long been proud of her father's character, should be ashamed of his manners? And had not even these, in true refinement and gentleness, far surpassed her own? What was there in him to arouse disappointment or excuse unkindness? Nothing ignorant, nothing coarse, nothing vicious. He had, on the contrary, qualities the reverse of all these. It was merely the absence of a certain trick of manner and note of voice which had filled her with protest against his claim upon her. It was the crudest and most stupid of class prejudices which had induced her to embitter the much-desired moment of meeting, and to wound cruelly one whose whole life was a long claim to her reverence and affection. Was then her boasted freedom from conventionality only a miserable conceit? Had she failed in the very first opportunity of serving her father, and sacrificing her feelings to his?

"Jack," she said as she drew near her home, "have I behaved very badly?"

"You have proved all your talk about sacrifices for your father to be unmitigated humbug, and shown yourself to have less feeling than I supposed any woman could possess," he answered in a tone of dry disgust.

His strong words flushed her face, and raised her head an inch higher; for her spirit of self-esteem was not altogether broken.

"You speak very plainly," she answered.

"Your actions spoke more plainly still just now. That is woman's gentleness, tenderness, tact, self-abnegation, and so on, I suppose. I can only say that he would be a hard man who could surpass it in selfish cruelty. A grey-headed man, and ill, and your father! But I presume that your fine feelings must be humoured at all costs!"

"He was such a stranger. I was so taken by surprise; and after all," she added with an air of vexation approaching anger in its intensity, "it is not you who should blame me. You always wanted me to give up the idea of devoting myself to my father. From your point of view you ought to be glad that we are not likely to agree."

"Is it so, indeed?" asked Jack with ironical politeness. "It did not occur to me that my own advantage might accrue from the mortification and misery of that old man whom we have left behind us. Nor does it, perhaps, occur to you that no man in his senses could care to marry a woman who could not love her own father. Regan and Goneril were, permit me to suggest, already wives when their filial treatment of Lear reached its climax."

"Jack!"—she stood still with flaming eyes—"you dare to insult me, and care to do it."

"I express my own feelings, simply, and according to your example. It is, apparently, the stamp of polite society. Mr. Dilworth, you may remember, subdued his. Or perhaps he hadn't any feelings? They remain our aristocratic privilege!"

He took off his hat with grave courtesy, and walked away.

Kate turned into the garden gate, and went straight up to her own room. She could not bear to see or to speak to any one at the moment. Two ideas filled her thoughts overpoweringly; she had cruelly mortified her father, and had been bitterly mortified by her lover in return. But the first idea gradually grew and obliterated the second. The thought of the old man whom she had left alone at the inn took fast hold of her, and would not let her go. He was her father, her hero, the one person she had longed for, had intended to devote her life to. It was he whom she had suspected of being unjustly treated by her aunt, perhaps negligently loved by her mother. But what was their injustice, or their negligence, to her harsh unkindness? It had never been in her aunt's power, it could never have been her mother's inclination to hurt him as she had done. Her mother had at least married him, had taken his name, and linked her life to his; and, however negligent and unappreciative her tenderness might have been, it must have been tenderness of a certain sort, passive and receptive, if not passionate and generous.

It had then been left for his daughter—the daughter who had so long cherished the ambition of becoming his comfort and compensation—to strike him the cruelest blow of all. She understood now how it had always been possible for smaller natures than his own to get the advantage when their interests had clashed with his. His strength was shown, in his dealings with such natures, chiefly by his gentleness, and his love by patience. Who could doubt that his feelings were the stronger at the moment when she was giving full course to hers? She remembered his silence, his hidden countenance; he had neither spoken nor looked at her until he was altogether master of himself; he had answered her attack by the sheathing of his own weapons.

And it was this man whom she had slighted, grieved, wounded with the cruel darts of a petty pride; it was his large heart that she had struck at in her shallow fastidiousness; while, all the same, he remained the one being up to the level of whose high principles it had been her ambition to live. She was grieved, ashamed, regretful. Never, never, could she undo that afternoon's work, and give to her father a love without the memory of any bitterness or disappointment. What must he think of her, even while treating her with his large indulgence, and sparing her the shadow of any reproach?

He had said that it was perhaps enough for a life-time, enough to content him always, that he should have sat for half-an-hour with her hand upon his head. The pitifulness of it overcame her as she thought of it, and she burst into passionate tears, no longer selfish and rebellious, but full of repentance and a desire to atone.

"How can I atone?" she said to herself with biting reproach; "whatever I may give to him, he has more to give me in return. There is no possible atonement, except to take his generous kindness, and let him ignore my miserable meanness."

She had begged to be excused from going down to dinner, and had rejected her aunt's offer of sal volatile and eau-de-cologne. She only asked to be left alone.

"I am sure something is the matter," Miss Leake remarked to Mrs. Dewhurst, "for Kate wouldn't open the door or let me see her. I believe she suspects the truth about her father, and is already troubled about it. Why didn't he go away as soon as ever he was fit? Hasn't he eyes to see for himself how unsuitable it is that he should stay here? Or why did he come at all?"

Miss Leake's anxious desire to secure to herself the care of Kate's life, growing through the years, had ended by making her capable of an injustice which she would have scorned in earlier days. She had come to regard the father's claim as unreasonable and importunate, a thing to be secretly evaded, or openly resisted. His desires were as nothing to her, his comfort was a thing beside the question. *Why* should he interfere when Kate was well and happy? This was a question which she asked with actual sincerity; for she had succeeded in blinding herself to the true view of the case, and to all the rights of her brother-in-law.

Meanwhile, as dusk came on, Kate, sitting alone in her own room, made up her mind. She resolved to wait no longer, but to undo at once the evil she had done. She would go to her father, and beg him to forgive her, and to love her, according to the largeness of his own virtue, and not the narrowness of her deserts.

She put on her hat, and stole out quietly, anxious that none should see her, and ask her questions. When she was reconciled to her father she would not care what might be asked of her about the matter. She even hoped to bring him back to the Stepping Stones that night, and to take him into the drawing-room to her aunt in triumph. Her face flushed in happy anticipation of it. She was full of impatience now, to take possession of him, to sit beside him, and make him talk to her. The look in his eyes when he said good-bye haunted and troubled her. She wanted to efface its memory by a happier experience. She had turned from him with shrinking coldness, but she was prepared to atone for her error now by rushing into the opposite extreme. She was full of the enthusiasm of youth, which desires and expects to change circumstances as rapidly as it changes its own moods, and hopes to undo mistakes as fast as it perceives them.

The way to the Red Cow had never seemed to her so long as it did that night. She went onwards with ever-increasing haste; beneath the trees, between the hills, now near the river, now farther from it. The shadows of evening lay upon the land: the hollows of the mountains were filling with darkness; the voice of the river was waxing in strength, as silence spread over the fells and grew in the leafy coverts.

She reached the little inn at last, and entered breathlessly. She was going to ask for Mr. Dilworth, but remembered that he would not be known by that name; she said, therefore, that she wanted to see "the gentleman."

"Well, to be sure," said Jane, coming forward in the dusty passage, "what a pity you didn't know! But he's left a letter for you, and another for Miss Leake—to be given to the post-boy. The post-boy hasn't passed, has he, James? Then bring the letters here. I suppose you might as well have them now, Miss Dilworth, as wait until morning."

Kate stood in astonishment and perplexity, but she did not ask any questions. When the letters

were brought to her, she took them eagerly, examined the outside to see if the writing were what she expected, yet dreaded, to see; then went to the door, and opened hers, reading it by the waning light.

"Dear child," it began, "I have thought it best to go away. We loved each other when we did not meet, and we shall do so again. Your letters have always been precious to me, and you will write to me often, oftener than before; that is all I want from you. I have not left you alone all these years because I was careless about seeing you, but only because it seemed to be for your happiness. So it still seems, although I would not believe it until I saw it with my own eyes. I know, dear Kate, that if I stayed in England you would be a dutiful daughter to me, but it would not be for the happiness of either of us. I cannot say more to-night; I pray God with all my heart to bless you, dear child, and to give to you by other means all that tender care which it is not permitted to me to bestow on you."

"Your loving father,
HENRY DILWORTH."

(To be continued.)

UNFINISHED.

NOW the misty twilight deepens o'er a waste
of marsh moorland,
And afar a stretch of cornfields merge in dusky
golden brown,
Of the gorse-encircled forests, where the stately
pines make whisper,
In a moan of sobbing cadence, to a sea-entrenched town.

Oh! the stillness deep and wondrous as the summer sun sinks redly!
Oh! the peace of resting calmly at the ending of the day.
When earth's voices jar no longer 'gainst the silence, steeping Nature,
And the mists of night creep slowly o'er life's weariful highway!

Far across the purple heather, faintly outlined through the gloaming,
One small figure speeding softly—swiftly-flying childish feet—
Break the darkly-brooding stillness, and a peal of silver laughter
Quaintly stirs Thought's minor musing with a chord more passing sweet.

Little hands that clasp me closely with a clasp so gently tender,
Voice that begs a fairy story, just the while we wander home.
Do you see that care is vanquished, and that you have proved the victor?
Nay, that knowledge, born of life-work, cannot to the children come.

Hath the brain, o'ertaxed at midday, strength to take a field so narrow
From an eminence at noon tide to enchain the childish heart,

In the far-off realms of fancy now to rouse its tears or laughter?
Or it may be with that story which is known as yet in part.

Ah! the tale is uncompleted, as the light beyond a casement Gleams a welcome from the shadows, and our feet no longer roam.
Are you sorry, then, my darling? We will finish it to-morrow—
Aye, to-morrow. In the meanwhile, it is good to be at home.

Were the words of that which should be in the end a greater prescience,
As a glint of angel's garments through the silence of the night,
For to-morrow, in the feeble sense of time that mortals measure,
Hath not dawned. I wait its coming in the fullness of the light.

Little life that knew not sorrow, God hath writ Death's solemn "Finis"
On thy youth's unsullied pages, and hath clouded dark my sky;
Yet, oh! vain heart! hush thy yearning; there is still a wondrous sequel,
We shall know it there together in His kingdom, she and I.

FRANCES HURRELL.

MEN'S DRESS.

A PARISIAN lady, when she presents herself to the public, doubtless holds that she is better dressed than the inhabitant of any other European capital. It would require a female pen to refute this pretension, if it could be refuted; but surely, it may be said without undue presumption, that a well-dressed English gentleman cannot be touched on the Continent. The simple fact that the more fashionable the male attire abroad, the more it approaches the English type, seems to show this.

And yet French writers will persist in misrepresenting the costume of a well-bred Englishman, in the most unobservant way. Théo. Gautier, had a capital eye for externals, but notwithstanding in his pretty tale—*Militona*,—he describes the dress of Sir Edwards, with an air of railing which has no point, because verisimilitude is absent from the satire. When Sir Edwards is fully got up, the two salient points in his appearance are a white cravat and a mackintosh—an altogether astounding combination. On another occasion, he is represented in a hat almost without brims, a cutaway, a waistcoat of large squares, a triangular collar to his shirt and a satin cravat, to which last Gautier applies what he considers its correct English specification, namely, that it was of *improved Moreen foundation*. And this scarecrow, it must be remembered, is not an eccentric tourist, but a member of the "high life," who has "porcelaines de Wedgwood," "des tapis dans toute la maison" "des domestiques poudrés," and all the rest of it.—PAUL BENISON.

A TIME OF DANGER.

BY PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

CHAPTER IV.

IN SORRY PERIL.

THERE was a low cry from Mr. Clifford and Miss Churchill. There was no triumph in the detective's eye or voice as he asked if he had brought the missing article to light?

"But how in the world could it have got there?" I asked, with unfeigned astonishment, and not realizing the position in which I stood. The look which I saw then in the eyes of Miss Churchill and her friend, and the dreadful suggestion of a smile round the corners of Mr. Maythorpe's mouth, showed me what my position was.

"Good God!" I cried, feeling my cheeks beginning to flame, "you dare not venture to think that I stole the ring—that I put it there?"

"What else can we think?" said Clifford; and face and voice alike were grave.

"You must be mad!" I cried, still half-dazed. "I will swear to you——"

"No, don't," said Clifford; "your doing so would not affect the matter at all. Lucy, you must let your uncle know at once of this sad discovery."

As she passed me, I saw a look of sad reproach in her eyes, in which my soul seemed to wither up. I don't know how long we stood there—myself, Clifford, and the detective. It seemed like hours, but in reality, I suppose, it was nothing like that time. The day went by—the day with its far-reaching sounds, and through all the horror of my position kept ringing on in my brain, till they seemed rest of all meaning, the last words I had written to Grace before this thunderbolt had fallen—

My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June:
My love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

At length Miss Churchill returned, anxious and grave-looking. She said her uncle wished to speak to me in her presence. I followed her to his room.

The old man was sitting up in bed. As soon as the door was shut, he began, not speaking at first in a loud voice, but in tones of concentrated bitterness.

"Come close, that you may be looked at well. One does not get the chance every day of seeing a gentleman thief. Barnum should have you! You'd be a better show than any of his other beasts. Then, when you had been well shown round, you could be returned as ripe for jail. So you, with your pretty, innocent boy's face, and your high-flown ideas about love and morality—you were the thief who, being allowed into the privacy of my bedroom, pried about when I had fallen asleep, to see what he could put his hands on."

"Mr. Churchill," I cried, getting rapidly beside myself with indignation, "I will endure no more

of your underserved taunts. I am as ignorant of this matter as you are yourself."

"Thief and liar!" thundered from the bed. "How dare you speak to me?"

I sprang forward, but checked myself at once, seeing I could do nothing against a man of his age, and who was, moreover, rendered helpless by a bodily ailment.

"Forgive me," I said, growing suddenly calm; "but I am not used to being so addressed. I am ready to attend your detective."

"And so you should," he answered, "but for my niece here, who pleaded so with me not to ruin your life, that at last she gained her point. Tomorrow, by the first train, you quit Locksley. You will be hardly likely to send people this way for a reference. Now go, and may your punishment be to know yourself the thing you are!"

I left the room—I would have left the house and slept that night at the inn, but I knew the matter would be by this all over the neighbourhood, and that I should be regarded as the pardoned thief! It was an awful situation. I locked myself in my room, and began walking up and down. There was Grace, and she must be told, and I confess the facts did look damning.

It had been proved that I was the last person who saw Mr. Churchill that night, and I had left him asleep. I had kept the key of the escritoire; when asked if it had any secret drawers, I had said no; and then a secret drawer containing the ring had been discovered. Could Grace believe in spite of that? Why, I was almost beginning to doubt myself! And suppose she could force herself at first to have faith in me. Could she keep out, for long, little doubts from creeping in? I drove my teeth through my lips at the thought till blood came.

"God!" I cried aloud; "to be doubted by Grace, who has always looked up to me as the soul of honour!"

Then I went to my bedroom, and began to pack feverishly. The day went by, and I neither drank, nor smoked, nor ate. My lips felt blistered, and yet it seemed as if nothing might pass them. The twilight of that never-to-be-forgotten day was falling. I sat alone in it, hardly knowing whether I was asleep or awake.

I remembered small details of my journey down to this ill-fated spot. I remembered the young man who had flirted with the pretty barmaid at the station. I wondered if he continued his practice of vapid flirtation, or if some awful calamity had overwhelmed him too, and left him crushed, to laugh no more! Churchill, I felt sure, was a vindictive man. I knew that some friends of his were also distant acquaintances of mine, and that he would be sure to tell them, and, in this little world, might they not in turn know people I knew, and so the position be stated, and I be shunned by all my fellows? I came very near then putting an end to myself, so as to fly from the shame that was, and the yet greater shame that might be.

"O, Grace, Grace, my darling, my life's one joy, one hope! how shall I ever be able to tell you!"

Just then the door opened, and a servant—a man to whom I had been enabled to do a good turn—informed me, in tones which I knew to be purposely insolent, that Miss Churchill would

speak with me in the drawing-room. I arose and followed him. It is the uneducated who are first to jump on a fallen man. Miss Churchill was standing by the open window, and in the low light I could see the expression of her beautiful face was grave rather than stern. Mr. Clifford was lounging by her in a chair.

"I want to ask you," Miss Churchill began, "if you will mind locking your portmanteau to-night, as you said was your practice? You see, to catch the five-forty at Kingstown, you will have to leave here at five, and the slightest noise awakes Mr. Churchill, who sleeps more between four and ten than at any other time; and I should like, if you don't mind, to have it brought downstairs to-night, and left in the hall."

I replied that it was already strapped and locked, and ready at any time to be sent for.

I was about to withdraw, when she detained me, saying—

"Stay, if you please, as there are one or two things I wish to say to you. Mr. Clifford is going to give the servants some directions, and he will tell them what to do."

"Yes, I will see after that," said Clifford, walking towards the door, which had no sooner closed upon him than Miss Churchill began, speaking rapidly—

"I really wanted to see you alone for a few minutes, to tell you how grieved I am about what has happened. From the bottom of my heart I pity you."

"I deserve your pity if you only knew!" I groaned. "I am innocent, as innocent as you, and yet my life is blasted."

"No, no," she cried protestingly, "not that. What has happened need never be known, and were it even to be known, I believe you are strong enough to live it down."

"I am innocent," I repeated; but she went on, not heeding my words—

"If you would only confess everything to me! I have heard of some people over whom precious stones, when of unusual brilliancy, exercise a fascination which cannot be resisted. They must get them into their possession for some time, to gloat upon. Then when their great longing has been somewhat appeased they return them. I feel sure that such was your case."

"Dear lady," I said, my brain seeming to reel round as I spoke, "granting that you think I must have been guilty of having taken the ring, it is good of you to put the case as you just now have. Were I the thief I am supposed to be, I would spring at the explanation you have just suggested; but I am no more a thief than I am a liar! and how that ring came into my keeping, I have not the glimmer of an idea."

I saw by the expression of her face that I had disappointed her, that her last hope was gone. Still her tones were not unkind as she said—

"You look wretchedly ill. Perhaps you have not eaten all day, you must have a glass of wine and a biscuit, you look as if you were going to faint. Sit down."

At her words, I dropped into a chair, yet hardly knowing what I did. Sparks of fire came into my eyes, then everything before me turned into a blood red. The colour seemed getting through my eyes into my brain. I leaned my face into my hand to shut it out; I heard, as in a trance, the

door open and shut. I heard low voices and a clink of glasses, then a hand on my arm, and a woman's voice saying—

"There, look up, you must swallow some of this; it will do you good."

I looked up, and beheld by blended lamplight and twilight the compassionate eyes of Miss Churchill. I did eat the biscuit and drink the wine, after which I confess to feeling more natural. I said I must intrude on her no longer; but she said I had better rest quietly for a few minutes more, and then, leaving the door open behind her, she went into the hall, and began playing slow, soft music—music that seemed a spiritual presence in the place.

"Thank you," I said when the music had ceased, and I felt her coming towards me. I say felt, because my face was again fallen into my hands, and I could not see. "You could not believe in my innocence," I went on, "but you have not been hard with me, indeed!" And here the tears would have their way. "You have been an angel of mercy to me."

"I feel," she answered—we were looking at each other then, and her eyes were full of pity—"that wherever you may be, in whatsoever temptation placed, you would not do again what some people can but think you did last night."

"Heaven bless you for your faith!" I said.

Then our hands touched, and we parted, I to go direct to my bedroom, but not to bed. Without undressing I cast myself upon it, and realized as I never had done before those wonderful lines—

And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish lies like shame!

Literally my eyelids were heavy, weighed down as it were by weight of grief. With my candle burning I fell into a light sleep, from which I was awakened by the sound of my own moaning. I started up, electrically and suddenly wide awake. Had I heard, simultaneously with my awakening, the sound of my own door being shut-to gently from without, or was it from within? Could anything have glided past me unperceived? The thought chilled me. I remembered again Miss Churchill saying the house was haunted, and that when ghosts walked, it meant disaster to some inmates of the house. If ghosts had been abroad the previous night, they had certainly foretold disaster enough to me. Could worse be yet in store?

I sprang off the bed, and looked under it; I flung open a press door, and started back in horror at what? What but at sight of an old grey morning coat which I had forgotten to put in my portmanteau. It was only eleven as yet. I would go down to the hall where my portmanteau stood and put it in, so as to have nothing to do in the morning. Not wishing to be seen though, I held my door open, and looked out. All was dark. All would have been perfectly still but for the sound of a door closing stealthily. It seemed to me as if my movements were being watched, and I reflected that this was only likely to be the case. Was I not regarded as a desperate thief? and might I not try on this my last night some scheme for the capture of new booty?

But I descended the stairs, reached the hall, and kneeling down by my portmanteau opened it, and, as I placed my hand in it, felt a roll of crack-

ling paper—that paper which the touch knows at once for bank-notes. I drew out the roll, and counted in utter astonishment no less than ten ten-pound notes. It was certainly not Mr. Churchill who had put the money there; and though I believed Miss Churchill to be sorry for me although she believed in my guilt, she was far too much of a lady to express her sympathy in that manner.

Clifford, I thought! It was much more like a man's way of showing sympathy than a woman's. But if I looked carefully, might I not find some written word of explanation. Looking and feeling at the same time, my hand struck on something hard and sharp. It was a common kitchen knife. I passed my hand over it, and felt that it was wet. Then I saw that it was red with the unmistakable red of blood! A great horror seized me. I had no such knife! how came it there?

I replaced the knife with the notes, resolving now to leave things just as I had found them. I turned over my clothes, and before long came on something rolled into a ball, that was certainly not my way of doing packing. I unrolled it with eager fingers, and found it to consist of a day shirt and a handkerchief, both marked with my initials and—good heavens!—both deeply stained with blood! I replaced them and fled, candle in hand, noiselessly to my room. I had at any time an unusually light step. What did it mean. For a moment I mistrusted my own reason. Had I gone downstairs at all? Had I really seen those things? Could I myself have done something fearful, and forgotten all about it? More than once that day, it had seemed to me that I had restrained myself from going mad by sheer force of will.

At length I controlled these fancies, wound up my watch, and noted the time accurately. Precisely twenty-one minutes past eleven. I was in a highly nervous condition, but not mad. Some mischief was afoot; I must try and find out what. It then occurred to me as a good thought, to blow out my candle, feign heavy breathing, and at the same time to keep my ears very wide open. I am quick of hearing as I am light of foot. I heard the great clock in the hall strike the half hour, and then, after what seemed a great interval, the quarter to the hour. A door opened stealthily somewhere, and I could hear feet glide along the passage, and pause outside my door. What should I see if I sprang forwards? The impulse on me to do so was strong, but I thought it best on the whole to remain where I was.

Then there came a sound of very subdued whispering, and the light of a shaded lamp gleamed under my door. I never heard before of ghosts carrying lamps. The light remained for a moment stationary, then moved away. I leapt from the bed, and opened the door without sound, just in time to catch the light fading in the distance. I resolved to follow, whatever might be the consequence, and I did so, at first swiftly, but as I came nearer, more slowly. I discerned two figures moving in front of me. They stopped at a door, on the other side of which I had never been. They passed in quickly without staying to close it, and I entered after them. We descended many steps till we reached a dark subterranean

passage with doors on either side. I just heard these words, "In that left hand room, then I shall find you."

"Yes."

One figure stepped into the darkness of a doorway, and I pursued the quickly receding light. We traversed more stone passages smelling like vaults, ascended steps, and then passed through another door, which this time the person, whoever it might be I was following, stayed to close behind him, but I, not staying to reclose it, opened and passed through without the aid of the faint light. I knew now almost by instinct that we were in the corridor where Mr. Churchill's bedroom was situated, and that, I suppose to avoid any possible detection, we had reached it by a circuitous and underground route.

At his door the figure paused, and I, with my quick hearing, could detect the sound of a tool being dexterously used on the lock. I was right. The door, which Mr. Churchill invariably kept locked, moved back, and the light-bearing figure passed over the threshold, pushing the door gently behind him, as gently I moved forward and saw—how can I say what I saw? The figure of a man with his back to me. He had placed the lamp on a table standing at the bed-head, and was bending forwards, his arm a little raised. I had crept close to him; another moment I should have been too late. I sprang upon the bending figure, grasping the hand in a grasp of iron, so that it could not shake from it the thing it was holding, while I shouted, "Help, Murder!" but almost before the words had passed my lips, the dressing-room door adjoining Mr. Churchill's room opened, and two men were in the room—Martin, his faithful body servant, and the detective Maythorpe, who, I learned afterwards, had been retained until I was safely off the premises.

"I arrest you, Mr. Clifford, for attempt to murder," said Maythorpe, taking from his hand the knife which had so nearly done its fatal work.

Mr. Churchill gazed wildly about him.

"What is the matter with him?" I asked, seeing that he could hardly articulate.

"He took some brandy and water to-night, and I suspect," answered Mr. Maythorpe, "that it was drugged to make this job easy."

At length Churchill stammered out to his servant to go for Miss Churchill. In brief time the man returned to say that he had knocked and knocked at her door, and could get no answer.

"Then take a light, and open it," remarked the detective, who for the first time showed a sign of mild interest.

The man went, and returned again with something of horror in his face. Miss Churchill was not there, nor had she evidently been to bed, and what was most alarming the door leading to the subterranean passages was open. The prisoner was handcuffed, and left in my charge, while the servant Martin showed Maythorpe the underground passages, wherein, as I afterwards heard, Lucy Churchill had been discovered, and arrested on the charge of complicity in the attempt to murder Mr. Churchill on the early morning of the second of July.

It was not for many hours that Mr. Churchill could clearly understand what had happened, and before then I had acquainted Maythorpe, now quite my friend, with the strange contents of my

HOME CHIMES.

portmanteau, and Miss Churchill's desire that it should be taken into the hall over-night.

"So as to insure its being strapped and locked," he remarked, "before they unstrapped and unlocked it, and put in the things which were to settle the guilt of the murder on you, the incentive to the act being your dismissal for robbery! And she was very kind last night, and kept you in talk while Mr. Clifford put those nice little gifts into your portmanteau. The diamond ring trick was the first act to supply a reason for the crime. You say she came in while you were sitting by Mr. Churchill's bed? Did she not go near the dressing-table?"

"Yes, she did, for I remember her saying how disarranged her hair had become, and she hoped it had not looked so untidy all the evening. Then when she was going out, I asked if I should not call Martin to lock Mr. Churchill's door, and she said it was far more important that he should sleep. There was nothing he need be frightened of."

"Of course it fell in with her plans to have you the last man who had seen Mr. Churchill that night. It was when she was fiddling with her hair that she twitched up the ring."

I then told my friend the unpleasant little incident about my accounts not seeming accurate, and my feeling confident at my finding my books not quite as I had left them, but that the entries did seem to be in my hand-writing.

"Ah, forgeries, forgeries, my dear sir," said Maythorpe, who had relapsed into his old languor. "This little affair was got up to make the big affair more natural when it came. I never saw plans more deeply laid though. A mistake leaving that door open, but I suppose they were in a hurry, and expected to get the job done in a few minutes. But if you had not had your wits so well about you, things might have been, to say the least of it, awkward."

I shivered, and Mr. Maythorpe repeated—

"Very awkward, indeed!"

I had not, of course, completed my letter to Grace the day before, knowing that I should see her before evening, but I received an early telegram from her wanting to know why I had not written. I telephoned back—

"Quite well. Will write and explain."

About twelve o'clock I was sent for to Mr. Churchill's room.

The old man was sitting up in bed, a hard, pitiless look upon his features. At a little distance from him stood Miss Churchill, looking sullen but beautiful; and beside her, with lips that still strove to smile, the villain Clifford; and between them and the door, detective Maythorpe.

"Leechie," said the old man, while his features relaxed a little, "I want to entreat your pardon. This would-be murderer, who robbed me of my wife, as this woman knows, yet whom she harboured secretly nearly all day in my house, because of her low passion for him—this man and this woman, his accomplice, between making full confession or taking their trial have chosen the former."

The written and signed confession was then handed to me. It was just as my friend Maythorpe had sketched it for me, the object of the murder being to obtain the large fortune which was known to be willed to Miss Churchill by her uncle.

The money once fairly divided, Clifford had promised to marry her. I saw now why a young and inexperienced man had seemed so desirable in their eyes. The culprits said no word.

"And now, my beautiful would-be murderer," said Mr. Churchill, addressing his niece, "take what is yours, and, with the money I know you have in hand, take your vile self across the Atlantic, and if I ever hear of your being in this country again, the document which I hold in my hand becomes legal property. You understand."

"We do, sir," said Clifford in tones of blandest acceptance; "and I am sure we are much obliged to you for your leniency—are we not, Lucy?"

She said nothing, but looked daggers.

"And one word more," said Mr. Churchill. "You will be carefully escorted as far as Queenstown by my friend here (pointing to Maythorpe) and another gentleman of the force."

"I'm sure we shall be most happy to have their company," said Clifford; "I suppose they will be in undress."

"Pardon me, sir," said Detective Maythorpe respectfully; "but now that I know of this affair, I should be discharged from the force were I not to follow it up. The prisoners must take their trial."

"Well, so be it," said Mr. Churchill. "I don't know why I should stand between my would-be murderers and justice."

Then there was awful silence for a few minutes; but I knew the end had come, and that we should both be avenged.

There is hardly anything more to tell. Mr. Churchill was never weary of telling me that what little there was left of his life he owed to me. He made me telegraph for Grace and her mother to come down. His old will was burned, and a new one made, by which the whole of his lands proper and the whole of his fortune, with the exception of a few legacies, pass to me at his death. In the meanwhile, Grace and I are to be married, and we four are to live together at Grove House, and I am to write my novel, because Mr. Churchill thinks I have it in me to do so.

What Grace said when I told her all, how she trembled, and wept, and laughed hysterically to know I was safe, the reader can imagine better than I can describe; for I could not disguise from my darling that it had indeed been "A Time of Danger."

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

LUTCHINA,
OR THE BLUE LAKE.

BY A. POCKLINGTON.

—
PART I.
IN THE MILL.

—
CHAPTER I.
THE STRANGER.

IN the low sanded parlour of Max Bauer's inn, a few staid countrymen, cattle-drovers, and such-like, were engaged in beer quaffing and smoking. It was a very hot day outside, but here in this old-fashioned parlour the light fell dimly, and the air was cool as the golden ale that frothed in Max's shining tankards.

"Grutli!" he called presently.

"Mein Herr!"

"Go see if that blackamoor outside wants for nothing."

As he spoke the innkeeper pointed with his long pipe at a man who, despite the pleasant gloom of the parlour behind, was seated under the vine-trellised porch, where the sun trickled through like a flame, burning white-hot patches on all that lay beneath.

"A man who loves the sun like that must be a fool!" grunted Max to his customers.

These turned slow eyes of wonder on the broad back of their fellow-drinker, as seen through the doorway, but said nothing. Men who dwell among mountain-craggs and winters deep in snow are not quick of speech. They contemplate—they do not converse.

Grutli sped on her errand, her white teeth flashing with a smile—for the man without deserved the name of "blackamoor" in comparison to the tawny-haired, ruddy-cheeked population of those parts. His hair was black, and his brown skin tanned by sunburn to a deep bronze; but

his lips were red as a woman's, and his dark eyes as soft when he turned them on Grutli.

"Blackamoor or not, he is a handsome fellow," thought Grutli.

"Well?" said Max as she came again to him.

"He praises your beer, and says he will have more."

"So!" grunted Max, who had never known a stranger yet to be satisfied with one glass alone of his fragrant brew. "Well, I will bring it him."

And pipe in hand he strode forth with a second foaming flagon.

At first sight it would have been hard to tell the stranger's rank in life, his clothes being worn and weather-stained, whilst his bearded face bespoke more years than is usually numbered by the gay-hearted wandering student. It was the knapsack and portfolio beside him that, on a closer inspection, answered the question.

"You are painting pictures," observed shrewd Max, as he frothed up his sunny-hued beverage. "Well, there's plenty of that work to do here if you've a mind. It's a beautiful country—in summer."

And he pointed solemnly with his pipe at the glittering peak that filled in the end of the valley.

"Indeed?" said the stranger, helping himself to cheese, and not so much as glancing at the snow-white mountain before him.

"Aye," continued Max, blowing a cloud of blue smoke into the lazy air, "we have some rare beauties to show in the summer—though the sun can blaze too—but you, and—pardon!"—here Max allowed his hand to fall with a thump on an unsuspecting insect pruning its wings beside the traveller's plate—"you and the flies seem to like it."

The stranger laughed, a pleasant mellow laugh, that made Grutli, serving within, turn her head to look and smile in concert. "I was bred and have lived mostly in a sunny clime," he answered.

"So? Painting folk always do, they tell me. Not a few pass by us every summer, you must know, eager to try their hand on one or more of our four chief beauties."

"And what do you include in these—that white cone for one?"

"Freilich! it is a fine object on a hot day," assented Max, wondering to himself which of his spare rooms he should apportion to this poorly clothed artist. "Then there is the Blue Lake—it lies over yonder to the right of the snow mountain—a pool of water not half a mile round, but such water! Blue as the heaven above us, and so clear that where it is a hundred feet in depth it looks but six. A stream moreover runs from this lake, but no water that can be seen flows in, yet is it never empty. Crags black as ink compass it about, and gloomy woods, but just where the lake rests, the turf is green as emeralds and thick with flowers. It is a strange spot—bewitched, say some, for whatever falls into it turns to stone."

"Indeed?" said the stranger again, as he quaffed his beer languidly. "What about number three?"

"Oh, that's the Schloss."

"What Schloss?"

"Ah, 'tis plain you know little of these parts," returned Max somewhat scornfully. "Why, our Schloss to be sure, that is, the old Baron's—Wolfturm they call it. 'Tis a fine pile of building, old as the hills, and full inside of beautiful things. The Baron dotes on it, and hardly ever quits its walls, poor old gentleman."

"Why poor?"

"Because lonesome. You see, his wife died when her son was an infant, and that son now must be—why he must be your age I should say—but he's hardly ever at home; always roaming about, and leaving his father and the property to care for themselves."

"And the old man likes to see his Schloss on canvas?"

"Freilich! There is no painter but is welcome to enter his great gates, and try his hand at painting the old trees or castle. But they make a mess of it mostly."

The artist smiled a little. "Why is that?" he asked.

"Because of number four."

"Number four?" The artist seemed to ponder over the strange answer, and then looked wonderingly at Max.

"So! I thought I should puzzle you!" chuckled the innkeeper, and he screwed up his eyes into a humorous wink. "Yet 'tis odd, too, for surely most men must know that what lies at the bottom of every mess is a woman."

"Ah, I begin to see."

"Yes—but it is not often one sees such a woman as this. No wonder she turns the heads of all the lads who get a glimpse of her!"

"She is beautiful then?"

"Well, that's as tasted lie. But if you think of making a stay in this valley, and will go one day to paint our Baron's Schloss, I make no doubt you will come across the young witch, for she lives not far from the gates, and then you can judge for yourself."

"And make a mess of myself and the picture!" laughed the artist as he rose, and stretched his long limbs with a yawn. Then he thrust a hand

into his pocket, and took out a gold piece. "There," said he tendering it to the innkeeper, "that will pay the reckoning, and as to this pretty damsel, she must fall to the luck of idler pencils than my own. I shall make no stay in your valley."

"So be it," returned Max, gazing somewhat distrustfully at the gold coin drawn from so shabby a pocket. Nevertheless he brought out the change, and counted it, coin by coin, into his customer's hand, who had now shouldered his knapsack, and was ready to start once more on his travels.

With a courteous spoken "good-day," the two parted, but Max lingered for a brief moment to watch the departing stranger.

"Zounds! for a painter you had little enough to say!" muttered he, apostrophizing the pedestrian.

"Black men are silent men," said Grutli's voice behind him.

"Tschut, girl! what do you know about it?" says the sturdy innkeeper. "Go back to your pewters, they hold honester stuff than lies in men."

And Max, taking a pinch of snuff, re-enters his cool parlour.

CHAPTER II.

LUTCHINA.

The pedestrian pursued his way. He walked leisurely onwards with long measured strides that seemed neither to linger nor to hasten, yet which carried him well over the ground. His dark dreamy eyes were cast now on this side, now on that, and seemed to note every beauty around, from the green beetle that flashed like an emerald under a snow-white blossom to the eagle soaring in majestic circles above his head. The dust on the winding road, impelled by a shifting breeze, danced in white whirwinds about him; the silence was unbroken save by the roar of the torrent that ran foaming through the valley. Presently the artist paused, the scene seeming to please his fancy; he threw himself under the shadow of a boulder, and began to paint. He lost himself in the quiet reverie induced by the pursuit of Art, and never took heed of a gradual change taking place about him. It was only when a great raindrop fell like a tear on his canvas that he looked upward. Then he saw that the sun had disappeared, that the sky was black with clouds, that the silvery peak before him was wreathed with tangled masses of flying vapour.

One of the storms peculiar to mountain districts was at hand.

Gathering his materials quickly together, the artist hurried forward, for there was no shelter to be met with here, and Max Bauer's inn, with the village that clustered near it, lay far behind. Presently he reached a spot where the valley changed. In front, impeding all progress, towered the base of the snow mountain, white rifts in its frowning sides showing the course of snow-born torrents; here, too, from the mouth of a cavern belched forth the swift glacier-river by whose bed the traveller had hitherto paced. But now the valley broadened out to right and left, and almost with

out deliberating the artist turned towards the right.

His road still lay along the banks of a stream, but a stream of quite another nature to the one on which he had turned his back. For its waters were clear and sparkling, and flowed smoothly along, singing in undertones amongst a wealth of blossoms, dancing around the boulders that fretted its course, here breaking into miniature cascades, there rippling over beds of shining gravel—but where it threw itself across the glacier-stream, fighting a fight as if for death. An uproar of waters, a heaving of wildly raging billows—and then the milk-white ice-river flowed noisy onwards, the limpid blue-green streamlet passing unstained from its mad embrace, yet silently, as though song and strength alike were spent.

It looked like a struggle between two souls—but thunder-clouds darkened the heavy air, and the artist paused not to read any parables of Nature; when later he came to a halt it was for another matter altogether.

He had left the fierce meeting of these waters some half a league behind, and was hastening his steps as he noted the near approach of the tempest, when the figure of a woman suddenly emerging from the brushwood which clothed the opposite side of the stream stayed his progress as if by magic. He had an artist's quick if dreamful eye, this man. All unconscious that a watcher lurked in the roadway behind the great boulders, which the giant hand of frost had plucked in by-gone time from the mountain opposite, and centuries of summers canopied in green, the girl—her supple form and knot of brown hair betokening youth—stretched up her arms, and, heedless of the coming storm, began to pluck fruit from the boughs of a wild cherry above her. She wore neither shoes nor stockings. One little white foot lay half buried in mosses, the other was poised on a raised stone—her scarlet dress was kilted up short, and her shapely limbs gleamed from under its folds like those of a statue wreathed in poppies. Her arms flashed in and out of her full white bodice as she busied herself with the berries, her attitude revealing all the graces of a youthful figure—she seemed the naiad of the limpid stream by whose side she stood.

All at once some two or three leaden drops fell hissing to the ground, and a peal of thunder followed that woke every slumbering echo, and filled the air with sound. The girl dropped her laden hands, and turned her head to look skywards. But the artist only looked at her, having eyes for nothing else at the moment, for the girl's face was beautiful. So beautiful that he stood gazing like one entranced—but only for one moment—the next brought with it a flame of fire that seemed to cut the gloom in two with the glare of hell; the man pressed his hands to his shuddering eyeballs, and when he looked again the girl was gone.

"That must be number four!" mused the stranger, and he smiled a little as, throwing his cloak about him, he turned to breast the storm.

A few minutes later the drenched traveller was seated before the cheerful glow of a fire that blazed up the chimney of a little wooden mill upon which he had suddenly come. Admittance had been readily if gruffly given by the miller, a

tall thin old man who now sat opposite him, and whose red ferret-like eyes were fixed alternately on the flames and on the stranger basking in their warmth. Outside the thunder roared, the rain and wind tore at the casements, and the traveller sighed with contentment as he listened to the wild turmoil, and cast his eyes about him. The interior of this mill was a comfortable place enough, he thought. Gloomy perhaps, but that might be because it was old and impregnated with the subtle presence and odour of meal-dust—dust, however, which, though it coated the withered man opposite, seemed not allowed to rest on anything else. The oaken shelves and carved coifers, blackened by age, the blue and white delft that lined the wooden walls, the copper vessels on the polished table, flashed and gleamed in the ruddy firelight as though daily tended, and by no rude hand; a quaint jar filled with flowers, an old spinning-wheel in the corner, seemed to bespeak that hand a woman's.

"We have had a fine summer—doubtless your mill will work merrily once the harvest is gathered?" said the traveller at last grown weary of the silence. The miller turned his red eyes on him.

"Work?" said he, "work never comes to him who wants it. Work is money, and money goes only to those who have it already—not to the needy. Look at Max Bauer who keeps the inn you may have passed to-day; I say, look at him! A man rolling in wealth, who has neither kith nor kin, but only his own fat carcase to provide for, whilst I have hard ado to pay the Baron his rent, to feed myself and child and man. Bah, 'tis a scurvy world!"

The miller whose querulous voice had been raised to a fierce hiss as he gave vent to his spleen, subsided once more into silence. He looked like some grim spider as he glared into the flames and spread out his meagre hands towards the warmth.

"You have been here long then?" ventured the painter.

"Twenty years—a lifetime—and I am poor as Job." The man's head drooped on his breast, and a tremulous sigh, the sigh of the aged, of the miserable, escaped him. "Here is some mystery," thought the painter as he looked round for signs of the poverty complained of, but noted none; good if homely furniture abounded—here and there, indeed, a piece of carved wood, of painted porcelain, that some would have paid for in their weight of gold. "A miser?" wondered the artist as he turned his gaze on the miller's thin lips and knotted, clawlike hands. Then his thoughts went elsewhere. A flash of forked lightning darted in and out through the room; he did not hear the door open or close, but it seemed to him as if the rain for a moment beat louder on his ears, that the wind again buffeted his face, and he looked round. A woman stood in the centre of the room; her hair, all unbound and hanging loose, draped her in its red brown folds, and dripped water on the floor like her garments; the firelight flashed in her laughing eyes, raindrops sparkled on her white feet—she looked a spirit of the storm cast in their midst by a passing whirlwind, but the artist knew her for the maiden he had seen plucking wild cherries by the stream. Her glowing face was turned on the old man, she was about to speak, when the stranger's earnest gaze for the

first time met her eyes. For a moment she stood bewildered, then like a flash was gone from sight.

"My daughter—Lutchina," said the miller with a shrug of his bowed shoulders. "She will have come back with a fine appetite, I make no doubt."

"Surely you would not grudge so beautiful a creature her food!" murmured the young man indignantly.

"Beautiful? She is not so beautiful as her mother," was the retort. "Ah, if you are a painter as your looks seem to imply, you would have been glad to paint my wife. She has been dead many a year—but she was beautiful—beautiful as gold."

The querulous voice sank low, the last words had been said almost in a whisper, but the artist had heard them, and in the red firelight the word *miser* seemed to stand out in black letters on the man's brow.

"Lutchina is the name of your river," said the artist musingly.

"Aye. When the child was born nineteen years ago its mother had a fancy to name it so. You see, the Lutchina turned our wheel, and brought us bread—and I suppose she liked the music of it."

"She was right," answered the painter. "In this lone mill your daughter's voice must be as music to you, and her presence a source of much comfort."

"Oh, as to that—well, I will say she's handy enough," said the miller grudgingly; "if it were not for her we might be in a poor plight at times. You see it is hard to make both ends meet, so I turned our bit of land into a tea-garden, and she keeps it. Travellers pass by us on their road to visit the Schloss or the Blue Lake, and they always stop to have milk or fruit handed them by the girl. I don't know but what she brings in more silver than the mill."

"The mill is rotten, and Lutchina is beautiful," said the artist, gazing into the flames.

And then she came in. Not as the storm-spirit, with wind-tossed hair and rain-washed feet, but a maiden clad in shoes and stockings, and silken skirt of russet brown, her locks coiled modestly about her head, a red rose on her breast. She came in quietly as before, though in her little room above she had raged with some petulance. "To think of his seeing me such a sight, bare feet and all! Who is he, too? Where did he come from?" She wondered thus with crimson cheeks, and then put on her Sunday gown, and placed the red rose on her bosom. She looked at herself in her little mirror. "Yes," thought she, "the rose looks well in my white bodice, and 'twill please Matthias." Did she mean Matthias? Then she fluttered down through the grim old mill like a little brown moth, and making her demure curtsey to the stranger, drew a stool into the table, and bent silently over her lace cushion. Her fingers flew deftly in and out amongst the bobbins, the warm firelight gleamed on the red gold in her hair; she made a pretty picture, so perhaps the artist was to be pardoned for looking towards her as often as he did, while he listened to the peevish complaints poured by the miller into his ear, complaints against the weather, against his landlord, against everything under heaven.

"Lay the table," said the old man presently,

turning on the silent Lutchina; "the rain will not cease for another hour, and this gentleman will taste our coffee."

"Matthias is not returned," said Lutchina, as she rose to obey her father.

"We will not wait for him."

So Lutchina laid a snow-white cloth, and spread upon it the humble contents of her larder—bread and cheese, butter, and golden honey, a bowl of cream, and coffee which the stranger in his dreamy voice declared to be the best he had tasted. Smiling as he did into Lutchina's eyes, she knew not whether to resent the simple words or not.

When the meal was nearly ended, the miller's man came in. He appeared surprised at sight of the stranger, but after saluting him, seemed to forget his presence. He threw aside his wet cloak, and approached Lutchina with a pleased smile.

"There," said he, "I promised thee a fairing; and laid a small book in her hand. It was Schiller's 'Song of the Bell'."

Lutchina seized the little volume with a glad cry, and lost herself amongst the pictures.

"You good Matthias!" she said; and that seemed enough for the miller's man, who waited for no further thanks, but drew in his chair, and helped himself to the coffee Lutchina forgot to give him.

"A fool and his money are soon parted!" grumbled the miller. "Thou wilt get no wage again these three months."

Matthias answered nothing. He was used to the old man, having been his servant seven years; also he was hungry and happy. Had he not walked twenty miles that day through storm and sunshine to spend a hard-earned holiday with his old mother? Lutchina, was she not well pleased with his gift?

They began to talk together, the stranger and she, but the stranger said most. He touched lightly upon this subject and that, and related wonderful things about this and the other country through which he had travelled to paint, his eyes gleaming fitfully under his dark brows, his low, sweet, languid voice stealing like music upon their ears. Never had Lutchina heard such a voice; even the grim old miller seemed soothed by it, and listened spellbound. As for Matthias, he forgot to eat. Hunger seemed to have fled instead to his soul, for a new light kindled in his eyes, and burnt out the patience that had been in them. So the one talked, and the others listened, and outside the rain began to fall more gently, the thunder to cease. But the stranger lingered by the hearth as though loth to go till the last drop should fall. Lutchina idly fingered the pages of her book. Matthias, after helping her like any woman to clear the table, busied himself over his wood-carving. Silence after awhile brooded over them, and at length, when scarce an hour of daylight remained to him, the stranger rose.

He slipped a coin into the miller's hand, and saw the red eyes gleam with a baleful fire. "Lutchina! Why, where is the girl? I never heard her go," grumbled the old man on suddenly perceiving she was not with them.

"Lutchina is like a sunbeam," answered Matthias. "When she goes you hear nothing, only you feel it has grown cold and dark; then you know that Lutchina, like the sunbeam, is gone."

He spoke dreamily, like one absorbed in his work, and forgetful of a stranger's presence; then, meeting the artist's amused glance, bent a shamed face over his mill-model. When he raised it again, the stranger was gone.

"Who is that man?" asked Matthias.

"How should I know?" responded the miller, now casting up accounts under a dim rushlight. "A wandering painter, from his talk and his looks." He added: "You had better oil the mill-wheel, since you forgot to do it this morning. It seems to me you forget all things now-a-days."

Matthias rose—a tall strong man, who, perhaps born to command, was learning first to obey. He took his oil-can, and went away through the mill to the rusty old wheel. Simple as was the machinery, he laid a caressing hand upon it all, fondling bar and lever, nut and screw, as a father will his children. Like one grown fearless from custom, he threaded his way over moss-eaten beams and slimy joists, from which a false step would have cast him into the water below, and, his task accomplished, he crept down into the shadow of the great wheel, and paused to drink in the rain-freshened air. The evening was waning apace; the storm and the sun had sunk together; one lurid ray gleamed yet in the west, setting the snow-peak afire like a torch, but the narrow valley at its foot was growing full of creeping shadows. A fir-wood clothed the opposite bank of the Lutchina, here flowing deep and silently on its course as though oppressed by the wheel whose iron teeth cut sharply into its bright waters, and connecting the two banks together was a little wooden bridge, for just at the foot of the miller's garden the road left the one side for the other.

The eyes of Matthias had been fixed at first upon the river; why did he start as he raised them towards the bridge—why later turn pale?

Lutchina stood there, and by her side the stranger. She was leaning over the parapet; he was looking in her face. The sough of the wind drowned their voices, but the strong heart of the miller's man shrank within him; he cannot bear that his master's daughter should be at the beck and call of every passing stranger. When the last rain-drop had fallen, Lutchina had left the silent men, and flitted like a bird into the garden to look at her wet roses. Then, because the air was cool and sweet, she had lingered by the bridge. She picked off little lumps of mosses that filled the clefts in the woodwork, and flung them into the stream below, and pouted because her thoughts were not her own that night.

"I will not look at him!" she said, when she heard the stranger approaching—but he came all the same to her side, and looked at her instead.

Then he spoke, and the masterfulness there was in the man crept into his tones, so that Lutchina could not break from him though she wished. The wild free spirit chafed within her; she who had held every man at arm's length, who had feared none, whose wide blue eyes had gazed undaunted into the face of all who travelled through that lone vale—was suddenly awed and subdued in a manner she rebelled against, yet could not fathom. Why should her head droop before this black-browed stranger, her heart beat fast or slow as he seemed to will? She did not like him—she would go. But the soft sweet voice stole on her ears, and she remained. He put her questions, or

was he silent, and did she tell him everything? Afterwards she tried to remember, but could not. Only in the short while they lingered on the bridge he seemed to know all about her—the free simple life she led, the brotherliness of good Matthias, who, in the long winter nights when the snow fell and icy blasts tore at the roof, had taught her to love books. Happy? Why of course she was happy. And he had fixed his sombre eyes on her then, and added softly—"Happy! Why child, do you know how beautiful you are?"

A wave of scarlet swept up to Lutchina's brow—her blue eyes shrank before his earnest gaze—she trembled a little. Then he laid two strong hands on her pretty shoulders, and looked his full into the lovely face, and stooping kissed her on the lips.

"Mine!" he whispered, so low that it seemed a passing breath of wind, "mine!"

And in that kiss drew Lutchina's soul altogether from her.

The next moment the little bridge stood empty. The stranger was on his way through the firs, Lutchina panting within a thicket, like a frightened doe who has felt the hunter's knife on her throat. Her cheeks flamed, and her eyes burnt. In all her young life no lips but her father's had rested on her own. The wild students who in summer lingered about her garden, the passing strangers who paused for a smile and a word, or a bowl of cream from her hand—however much these longed, not one had ventured to ruffle the serenity of those blue eyes, the purity of those rosy lips, by so much as one rude action. And now, and now! Lutchina's breast heaved. He had kissed her, this man, kissed her—and *she had let him do it*. Tears of mortification rose to dim her eyes, yet she stayed within her shelter, her face toward the fir-wood, nor moved till the last footfall of the stranger had died upon the air.

The stars were shining before Matthias left the shadow of the mill-wheel. His face was white, and he held in his hand a drowned and crumpled rose which the waters had fluttered idly to his feet.

And it was about this time, too, that the stranger reached and turned in at the iron gates of Wolfthurm. The old forester who lived in the lodge beside them saw the tall figure enter as he smoked his last pipe by the window. He looked and started. "Wife," cried he, "Count Melchior is come home."

(To be continued.)

UNTIL THE DAYBREAK.

WITH calm, white face
That wears
No trace
Of fears or cares
Earth-born,
She, in her narrow bed
I' the City of the Dead,
Awaits the morn.

JOHN. F. ROLPH.

IN THE DAYS OF THE CRIMEAN WAR!

BY GRACE STEBBING.

CHAPTER I.

A WRANGLE ON THE WAY TO MARKET.

IN the present year of 1885 many a heart is somewhat sorrowful in this dear old England of ours. "Wars and rumours of wars" abound. Bright-spirited, gallant fellows by thousands have left us to uphold the position and honour of their country thousands of miles away, and, meanwhile, there are some millions of anxious relatives, friends, and sympathizers who must bide at home, praying for them with a painful mingling of hope and fear.

Thirty years ago, in these respects, things were in pretty much the same condition as they are now.

In 1855, the mothers, whose trembling lips have lately been almost ceaselessly imploring the Father of Mercy, and God of Pity, to guard their sons in the Soudan, were then half-crying their eyes out over thoughts of the absent lovers, far distant in the trenches before Sebastopol.

But there was one girl in a village on the east coast, a handsome, clever girl, who took no part in the general crying fits that were of periodical occurrence around her, when news came in of sanguinary skirmishes, and, still more frequently, of the sufferings and havoc caused in the distant camp by privations, disease, and fatal sicknesses.

No tears shone in Matty Beecham's brown eyes, no quiver was ever seen on the well-shaped mouth, during those two sorrowful years from 1854 to 1856. But during those two years a great change went on. It was so gradual that no one seemed at all able to decide when it was that Matty's brilliant laugh had given place to a cold smile, nor could any one fix a date to the time when the sauciness of high spirits, and girlish gaiety, faded away into a self-contained manner and sober demeanour that far surpassed that of her worthy and cheery old mother.

"Matty is n't half the girl she used to be," said a young woman, chattering away to a neighbour she had come up with on the road to market. "Not half she is n't."

Her older companion nodded her head sagely— "Maybe no, Mrs. Langdale, maybe no! Not half the girl, but twice the woman."

Mrs. Langdale did not appear as convinced as her friend that the exchange had been a gain. She uttered some unintelligible mutter of dissatisfaction, and then continued aloud—

"Ah! well, that's all very fine, Mrs. Epps, but I do love a bit of brightness myself, and I say as 'twere better nor all the physicking in the world to hear Matty Beecham's gay laugh, and to set eyes upon her when she used to be naught but one bright bit of impudence from her head to her feet. These are sad enough days we are upon now, anyhow, by what my man reads me in the papers, evenings, without courtin' clouds to make 'em darker. To look at yon Matty, a body might ha' supposed as her heart were out in them Sebastopol trenches, along wi' many another girl's, if we

didn't know as she's got such a regular good, comfortable sweetheart here at home. I'm—"

The elder woman interrupted her—"It's just that, to be sure, that makes the lass think upon steadyng down. Farmer Steadman's son is a good match for the daughter of old Beecham, a deal higher than she could have looked for, and, when she marries into a family whose ways and manners are nigher akin to those of gentry than she's been accustomed to, she'll wish, of course, to act conformable. She couldn't go gadding about giggling then, so it's well to learn how to leave off doing of it now."

Mrs. Langdale pulled her sun-bonnet farther over her forehead, impatiently, but as it was not the sun, but her neighbour's words making her feel hot, the action was not as useful as it might have been.

"Gadding about and giggling, indeed," she repeated angrily, taking up the cudgels eagerly enough on behalf of the absent girl. "Anybody well knows that they're not the words to put in the same breath with Matty Beecham. There's always been that about her of respecting herself too much, even when she was nothing but a slip of a madcap schoolchild, that prevented her giggling, and behavin' herself anyways unbecomin'; and I don't hold with young shoulders growing old heads on to them, as she seems to have been doing of late. As I said at starting, she ain't the girl she was when Edward Steadman took to his courting, and if I were he, I don't say but what I wouldn't want to be off my bargain, now she's so different to what she was. It was her fun and spirit, and her laughing eyes caught him, but they're all gone now."

"Laughin' eyes wouldn't help to keep Mr. Steadman's dairy in good trim, nor his shirts mended up," was the short answer.

Both women were tired with their trudge along the dusty roads in the sultry air, and if the subject of Matty Beecham had not afforded them something to squabble over, any other topic, it may be feared, would have been as fruitful in temporary irritation.

Meanwhile, little either of the women guessed, as they laid out their butter, eggs, and chickens in the market, how closely they had touched upon a secret hidden closely in the very depths of Matty's heart.

So closely had it been hidden away that even she, herself, had only within the past month or two discovered quite clearly that it had existence.

"To look at yon Mattie," Mrs. Langdale had said, "To look at yon Matty, a body might ha' supposed as her heart were out in them Sebastopol trenches, along wi' many another girl's."

Mrs. Langdale half-laughed, at what she considered the utter absurdity of her own suggestion. How bewildered, how astounded she would have been if she could have seen Matty and heard her, at the very moment she was uttering those words.

Kneeling on the sands, the German Ocean lying stretched before her in summer sleepiness on the one side, her shoulder pressed against a high wall of cliff on the other, the girl who was thought to have grown so cold, commonplace, and monotonous, was weeping as though life itself must pass out with her tears.

"Father, Merciful and loving Father," came

the murmur, with a desperate struggle for breath to utter it.

Another effort had to be made, another pouring stream of tears battled against, before voice would be found for the petition, put up so imploringly.

"Oh! Father, guard him, take care of him in those dreadful trenches there. Don't let the bullets kill him, or any illness there. But take care of him—Oh, take care of him."

A little later, and another prayer went up from poor, sorrow-stricken, simple Matty,—

"If it is wrong for me to pray for him. Ah! do not let him suffer for my wrong."

And a few minutes after she had sobbed forth that second prayer she rose, stepped down to the edge of the soft, lapping water, well bathed her face, arranged her hair and her hat, and then mounted the cliff cutting, turning inland to the market town. She had an appointment to meet her mother in the town, after market hours were over, to go with her to the linen-draper's establishment they chiefly favoured, and be guided by her judgment in the choice of a wedding-dress.

Her marriage was arranged to take place very shortly, certainly not with any soldier then on duty in the trenches before Sebastopol, but with the eldest son of farmer Steadman, sensible, plain-spoken Edward.

CHAPTER II.

AN "UGLY DUCKLING."

FARMER STEADMAN and his wife were among what the villagers called the "bettermost people" of the place, while the Beechams were a most respectable, well-conducted family, rather above their neighbours the farm-labourers, and others, but certainly not on a level with the farmers. A sort of stepping-stone between the two, but one that was nearer the cottage than the farm.

In spite of this, the young Steadmans and the young Beechams had all gone to the same school together, for some years of their lives, and during childhood's days the Steadman boys and girls had been as delighted, even proud, as any of the other children, when special notice or companionship was bestowed upon them by the universally proclaimed queen of the school, handsome talented Matty Beecham. Her vivacity of expression and manner were abundantly justified by her quickness in learning, her cleverness at games. Her generous heartedness was of that true nature that the frequent services she rendered others, always passed away from her own mind as mere natural, ordinary parts of the day's work; for which reason, possibly, they dwelt the more vividly in the memories of many of those she benefited.

"Folk be fond of telling me that my Matty's a handsome lassie," said old John Beecham one day, "and I don't say but what my eyes tell me that they are, may-be, right in that same notion of theirs. But in my judgment she's a something that's a deal better than handsome. She's got an honest, upright heart of her own, and one that fears God and loves our Lord. Men talk of being able to trust such-and-such of their neighbours with untold gold! That's well, but I've the gracious blessing given me that I can trust my Matty with herself; and sad to say that's more than all

fathers can dare declare as to their boys and girls. Her laugh's the merriest for many a mile around, but it rings true and wholesome. No poison at the bottom of it, of levity or rudeness, and certainly not of malice or ill-nature."

Some of this loving, but well-herited praise of her father's came in course of time, roundabout fashion, to Matty's ears, repeated from one to another as such things are sure to be until they come to an individual injudicious enough, or impulsive enough, to retail it to the person most concerned.

Several mouths carried portions of John Beecham's remarks to his daughter, but the fullest account of all was poured out one evening for her benefit by a lad of seventeen or so, about six years before the date at which our story begins.

Bert Steadman had left school two years ago; Matty, fourteen months his junior, had left about the same time, but the friendship with him and his family still continued. The parents recognized the good influence she exercised over her companions; and the young people continued to appreciate her friendship as much now, as when they were all children together.

Besides, with all her fun and merriment there was a certain dignity in the girl that made farmer Steadman and his wife feel "so safe" in having her about their home.

"No danger, in that quarter, of any nonsense or silly flirtations."

As regarded their eldest son, "Common-sense Ned" as the family generally nick-named him, there could have been no danger of the sort with any one; the same might almost be said of the second son, Ernest, but as regarded the third boy, Herbert, all this was declared by the parents to be different. The good-looking young fellow was certainly different to his elder brothers in every way.

They were both rather dark, he was exceedingly fair. They were both quiet, steady, prosaic, sensible, of the slow-and-sure class of people. Herbert was hasty, impetuous, with a dash of poetry in his nature, some tiny strain of the fire and fervour of genius, combined with keen sensitiveness, humility, and a most hungry craving for sympathy.

Poor fellow! He might as well have asked one of the hens in the poultry-yard for sympathy, as have looked for it in that home where he was utterly and wholly misunderstood. Even his faults were only half comprehended, and his virtues were a perfectly sealed book.

"If only children would be after one pattern, so that people might know what to be at with them!" sighed his mother in his infancy, when she had already begun to find his management perplexing.

Both his brothers in their babyhood had been content to lie awake in the cradle hours together placidly gazing at nothing, or looking at the flies on the ceiling. His sisters had been equally exemplary. But as for himself! never was there a more aggravating baby known. Leave him sound asleep, and you hadn't turned your back a moment but he was wide awake, the cradle turned over, and its proper occupant crawling away, at the most marvellous speed, to make close acquaintance with coals, fire, blacklead, soap, train oil, boiling water, anything and everything in short

to which a baby should give a wide berth, and which was likely to render him the greatest possible amount of trouble to his belongings.

If he had but been a common-sense baby he would surely have known better than to go to work like this, prejudicing folk against him before he had really had a fair sort of a start in life!

His only actual friend, as well as relative, at home was "Common-sense Ned." In his quiet, unobtrusive way, he truly loved his quicksilver young brother. Loved him so well that he would have gladly expended a great deal of strength and trouble in his service, if such expenditure would have availed to smooth him off, and plane him down into a nice level, white deal board like himself. But as for understanding him, that Edward never pretended to do any better than the rest of the family.

His schoolmaster understood him no better. He tried, for duty's sake, to scold him, and punish him, and threaten him, and solemnly warn him into being like the rest of his companions, but it was no good. He could not be like them, and the schoolmaster gave him up as hopeless.

What, indeed, could any poor master do with a child who perpetually forgot himself so far as to sketch the daintiest of little pictures, when he ought to have been writing round O's, big B's, and little c's? A small urchin who wrote the queerest little mystical verses and fairy tales, when he ought to have been learning a column of spelling!

Poor Bertie. He humbly admitted that of course his productions were "stuff" and "trash," and disgraceful waste of time, and burnt them all. All, at least, but a few that his brother kept, not because his opinion was any higher of them than the school-teacher's, but just because they were "poor old Bert's."

One other individual kept some of the little sketches and tales for the simply-felt and simply-expressed reason that they were—"so very pretty."

Their humble-minded author felt painfully conscious then, of their imperfections. He could see all manner of supreme beauties in Matty Beecham's person and character, but, the more clear his vision was in this respect, the more cloudy his perceptions became as to anything of worthiness in his own productions, when they were in Matty's hands.

"You only keep them out of kindness to a fellow, of course I know that well enough," he said with a sigh, half of gratitude, half of despondency, as he pushed back the wavy light hair from a forehead a good deal whiter than her own.

Matty shook her head at him.

"Berts, that's bad of you to say that. However horrid I am, in lots of ways, I will dare to say that everybody knows I always tell the truth."

She looked really hurt, and forthwith the boy poured forth a string of penitent apologies and honest compliments, winding up with all he had heard, and so heartily endorsed of her father's praises of his young, dear daughter.

"Hush, Berts, you'll just go and turn my head," she said at last, blushing and laughing. "I'm as vain as a peacock already, I'm beginning

to be afraid, or I shouldn't have had the face to stand and listen to all this."

"Yes, you would," was the quick rejoinder, "out of kindness and pity you would, if you only knew how it pleases me to tell it to you, and how hungry I get sometimes for a sight of you."

An! decidedly the unspoken suspicions of farmer Steadman and his wife, regarding this third son of theirs, were justified. However safe from "nonsense" and flirtations their two elder boys might be, they could not affirm the same with regard to this strange, ugly duckling sort of a third son of theirs. Even with merry, innocent, laughing young Matty, he would doubtless soon begin to flirt, or, as he had done already—without Matty or any one else having the least suspicion of the fact—fall honestly and earnestly in love with her, with all the fervour of a most true and steadfast heart.

His brother Ned loved him, and he loved his brother Ned. He loved Matty Beecham, and Matty never so much as dreamt of loving him, didn't love anybody excepting her father and mother, and all the world. Her heart was large, and took in the universe, but no one creature in particular as yet, outside the walls of her home.

Whether did his parents love this youngest of the Steadman line?

"Well, poor Bertie, poor boy, you see he is awkward one way and another, and to know what to do with him! Two's quite enough, and almost to spare on the farm, only that Edward and Dick have so much each other's ways. But as for poor Bertie!"

And that was the way, of late, in which poor Bertie's parents always shelved the unbidden wonder in their own minds, or neighbours' questionings, as to whether they loved this boy, who had been so tiresomely endowed with altogether different characteristics to the rest of his relations of the present generation.

People don't generally *love* puzzles.

CHAPTER III.

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

It is the common rule for families to make their moan and lamentation over any members of them who may take it into their heads to enlist. It is strange that it should be so, seeing that it is a most imperatively urgent duty for some men, at any rate, of a country to be willing to be trained to the greatest capacity for defending their hearths and homes, and welfare. And for the danger of the service, as a rule, it has no more than the drivers of express trains incur day after day, without exciting so much concern in the breasts of those nearest and dearest to them.

But as regards enlisting, and the aspect in which it is commonly received. There came to be an exception to the ordinary rule, with regard to some of the people we are here concerned with.

A recruiting sergeant found his way to the Steadmans' neighbourhood just at the period when Berts was daily becoming more and more painfully conscious that his parents felt him to be an incumbrance in the home, and yet grudged the money from his brothers and sisters which

would be required to put him out elsewhere in the world.

A good many of the do-nothing, ne'er-do-wells of the district were induced to enlist, and two or three others. Over these two or three others there was the customary moan, but as regarded the rest there went up a general song of jubilation, headed with a loud note by farmer Steadman. His young son noted the fact. As soon as dinner was over he walked down to the Beechams' cottage, lingered about it till he caught sight of Matty's bright face, heard the sound of her merry laugh, then hastily rubbed the back of his hand over his eyes, hastened off to the sergeant's quarters, and enlisted.

His parents were decidedly taken aback when he returned home, and told them quietly what he had done. They did not storm at him. The family temperament was too phlegmatic for that. Besides they were too honest to assume a wrath they did not feel. Barring something of a come-down to the family pride there was a secret feeling of relief at the step the "ugly duckling" had taken. And as far as the pride went, even that was not much hurt, for, as the father said to the mother—

" You see everybody knows that the lad is odd. Neighbours won't count up to us what he does as they would the doings of any one else."

To his boy the father said grimly—

" Oh ! indeed, enlisted have you. Taken a pretty decided leap on your own account this time, truly, and with no leave asked or granted. Well, I suppose you won't expect to be coming backwards and forwards here, to lower your brothers and sisters, just whenever you please, after this ? "

Herbert bit his lip. He was but a lad of eighteen.

" No, father," he said at last. " Not if you and mother don't wish it. But about lowering any one by doing so, I don't see that. The Germans hold their heads as high as any one, as a nation, and all men there, from the highest to the lowest, have to serve in the ranks part of their lives. Many of them are very God-fearing people too. I hoped you and mother would be very glad I'd found an opening for myself, that would save you having to trouble about me any more."

A little pang did shoot through his mother's heart as her youngest child said that. She had not thought he knew so well that he was almost one too many in the nest. It was almost as though by way of apology that she hastily put in—

" Nay, Bertie, you've no call to say that. Trouble, in a way, you've never rightly been. You've never been what folk call a bad boy, only—only—well—awkward-like to manage, or know what to do with."

The new recruit laughed huskily.

" Just so, mother. And so I've happily been guided to do something with myself, and I am quite sure that you and father will feel the comfort of it fast enough. Before the week's out, I doubt. We leave here Thursday."

Two days later Bertie had left his native village; three months after that he was on his way to India. Between two and three years after that again he returned to England with his regiment; and as colour-sergeant, or " non-commissioned officer," as his father carefully styled him, and of course his sisters, the young soldier was bidden home to spend his leave.

He had been in " a little brush with the

natives " once, while abroad, and the inhabitants of his village were quite willing to give the doubtful penny a friendly reception, and show some tokens of belief that it might perhaps turn out to be a good one after all.

He brought with him a whole heap of dainty little foreign sketches, which he bestowed in apparently off-hand fashion upon Matty Beecham.

" They aren't any worse, at any rate, than those you used to take pity on when I was a youngster."

Matty laughed, and shook her head.

" All very fine to talk like that. I believe you're as vain of them as a cockatoo of his topknot. But there, never mind," she added; with another laugh, and her eyes dancing mischievously. " Your pictures and you are really grown both quite fine, both well worth looking at, we all think, I assure you."

Herbert Steadman turned away from the bright, handsome face. The merry, plain-spoken compliment did not please or flatter him ; it stung him to the quick.

Had Matty guessed how he felt for her, he argued to himself, or returned the feeling to the least degree, it could never have been uttered in this fearless way.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING GOWN.

" BERT STEADMAN is off to the Crimea, poor lad," said old John Beecham one day in 1854, as he came into supper.

" Do his people seem to mind ? " asked Mrs. Beecham.

" Eldest brother's a bit cut up. I haven't seen none of the rest. But I don't mind as they set any great store by him, even when he was home on leave last year."

They set greater store by him when news came in the month of September of " Alma," and how that every man in Bert's regiment had borne himself gallantly in that great battle, and Colour-Sergeant Steadman was slightly wounded, and highly commended.

Farmer Steadman growled and rubbed his spectacles over the words " Doing well," and actually sat down and wrote his son a letter.

Edward Steadman set off for the six-mile walk to the sea-coast, met Matty Beecham there, and with a gulp in his throat told her the news.

" I'd much rather have worked double tides all my life, and kept him at home."

Matty bestowed an approving look upon him.

" Poor fellow, I am so sorry for your present anxiety. But you know your brother would never have been happy to stay at home and be a burden upon you. And—and—Mr. Edward—"

" Yes, Matty."

" We—he—all of us—are in our dear Father's loving care."

" Yes, Matty, thank you. It is a comfort to know that. But I do feel troubled."

And then he continued his solitary walk along the shore, and Matty went home, telling her parents of Edward's grief on his brother's account, with a tremor in her voice which was put down

wholly to sympathy with the stay-at-home's distress.

Grief was still greater in another home in the village, for one of Bert's comrades from the same place had been killed. Gravity grew apathetic.

Montha went on. That year, and the terrible sufferings and privations of the winter were past, to make way for others. Cholera was thinning the ranks with tenfold swiftness to the bullets. In the midst of this sorrowful scene Bertie wrote to his eldest brother. This was a bit of his letter:—

"A poor fellow, just before he died last night, charged me with a message to his sweetheart, if I should live to go home. And that put me upon thinking over things, and coming to the wonder why you don't get married, Ned. There's sweet, bright, handsome Matty Beecham. I do wish you'd have a try to win her. I know if you do, you'll have a good wife, and I am quite sure that you will do your very honest best to make her a good husband."

Straightway simple, blunt, Common-sense Edward carried this letter to the Beechams' cottage, gave it to Matty to read, and asked her to marry him.

She had been gradually growing grave for months past, but she was more than grave when she gave the letter back, and said—

"But supposing the day should come when you will repent of marrying a wife only to please your brother?"

"I am not like that," was the perfectly true reply. "Besides, I am pleasing myself, for there is no girl I have ever seen whom I would so thankfully have for my wife as you."

When he returned home he carried Matty Beechams' promise with him.

It need scarcely be said that when the Colour-Sergeant wrote to his brother, his firm conviction was that he should not live to return to England, and he was anxious, before he died, to do what he could to secure a good husband and a really comfortable home for Matty.

Poor fellow, when the tidings reached him of the success of his efforts, and he found himself still alive, he found that there are some impalpable things that get into one that can be almost as fatal as bullets, and perhaps more painful.

"If only the pair would get married quick now, and have done with it!"

However, Matty had no idea of getting married quick, until Bertie wrote and urged the matter so strongly, that Matty finally consented to go with her mother to choose the wedding-gown.

Poor Matty! she was in sad case truly, about to be wedded to one man, to do the bidding of another who had never spoke one word of love to her, who was eager, it seemed, to make it impossible that he ever could do so, but whom she found that she loved to the point of a breaking heart.

It was well that Mrs. Beecham went with her daughter to help choose the dress, for she had to do the whole business; and while the shrewd, careful old matron examined textures and dyes, the equally shrewd old haberdasher made his silent comments on the wistful-eyed, absent-minded maiden, for whose wear the dress was purchased.

Purchased and made up, and the day all but fixed—"all but," not quite.

Edward Steadman was not very keen-sighted or keen-witted; neither was he blind.

One day he sought his promised bride down on the sea-shore, took her hands gently within his own, made her face him, and with great gentleness asked her—

"Matty dear, for whose sake have you promised to marry me—for mine or Bert's?"

He found out all, then.

"Have I been very wicked?" asked the bitterly-weeping girl. "Oh, I suppose I have. Try to forgive me. I did not mean to be."

"There is nothing to forgive, dear," was the tenderly-spoken answer. "I must have had some knowledge, without knowing it, of how things were, when I instinctively brought his letter with me to plead my cause with you."

"But now you—you will not—tell him?" stammered Matty imploringly through her sobs.

Misunderstanding the request, simple Ned replied—

"Oh, but I have."

Matty's cheeks flamed; even the tide of her fast-falling tears was checked suddenly as she exclaimed—

"Oh, how could you? Told him that I—I—"

At last Edward began to understand her womanly fears. He took back one of the trembling hands, and said soothingly—

"I have told him nothing about you that you would rather not have told. It was about showing you his letter I told him. That is all."

However, at the beginning of August, 1856, "Common-sense Ned" did tell his brother, Lieutenant Steadman, something more which resulted, no long time after, in the marriage and great happiness of Matty Beecham and her soldier lover. He painted pictures to some purpose after that.

JULY.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

JUNE has been called the month of roses; we may with equal propriety call July the month of lilies—the most beautiful of all flowers—Solomon, we know, in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. This allusion was no doubt made to a species which is common in the East; the *Amaryllis lutea*, the golden blossoms of which are gorgeous beyond description. By the middle of this month those species which are grown in Great Britain are in full bloom, and the air is heavy with their fragrance.

The early flowers of spring are gone, have matured their seeds, and are now fast hastening to decay, and those that love a fiercer sun have succeeded them. At the beginning of this month our gardens are in the zenith of their beauty; charming with a wealth of colour, both of blossom and foliage, which they do not possess in such abundance at any other season of the year. Those who would like to have a perfect description of a charming garden, we would recommend to turn to Milton's "Paradise Lost," and there read of the fragrant leaves, the odorous shrubs, the beauteous flowers of the garden of Eden. Nothing

has, in our opinion, ever equalled this description of a garden; but who has time to read Milton now-a-days?

This is the month, beyond all others, for the enjoyment of rural pleasures, amid those pastoral pictures that have been painted in glowing words by all poets, from Theocritus to Thomson. Arcadian scenes and rural simplicity have ever been the delight of the children of song. Our own matchless Bard, "The Swan of Avon," whose rural descriptions breathe sweet odours of the country as well as invitations to partake of its delights, says, in the "Winter's Tale":

Come, come my good shepherds, our flocks we must shear,
In your holiday suits, with your lasses appear,
The happiest of folks are the guileless and free;
And who are so guileless, so happy as we?
When love has possessed us that love we reveal;
Like the flocks that we feed are the passions we feel;
So harmless and simple, we sport and we play,
And leave to fine folks to deceive and betray.

Those who have passed their days within the walls and streets of a great city, can form but an imperfect idea of the rustic innocence and happiness here described, and may possibly doubt its existence.

But "Hot July, boiling like to fire," as Spenser has it, is upon us; let us leave the close and dusty town and revel in the sweet-smelling, shady country lanes. We have not the gift of prophecy, and for aught we know this present month may be a specimen of the good old-fashioned sun-burning, freckling summers. Let us rejoice in this pleasing hope. For oh! the horrors of those damp and sunless days in summer, when our warm clothing has been all consigned to out-of-the-way chests and drawers, not to be abstracted without much serious deliberation; when the fire-places, from which a genial warmth would be grateful to our shivering limbs, are dressed up in fantastic array with "something Japanese," or, a sort of apron, rivalling those of freemasons in gorgeousness, which must on no account be displaced until the orthodox time for fires comes round again.

But let us away to the country—not your Cockney-country of Epping Forest, Hampton Court, or Greenwich Park, but the real genuine, bona fide, unmistakable country—far away from the busy haunts of men, where Nature's canvas is rich with form and colour—to green woods, where the foot of man but seldom treads, and where no relics of picnics in the shape of Roederer's labels flutter across our path. Let your dreams be of deep blue skies, charming scenery, and the scent of hay-fields.

Here we are at last, deep in the heart of the country, where the farmers are all busy carrying their hay, and a pleasant sight it is as we sit here on the hill overlooking the quiet valley, to note the laden waggons plodding and plunging with their fragrant loads through the deep ruts of the green lanes, fringing as they go the hanging branches of the shadowing trees with their sweet spoils. The whole atmosphere is now redolent of this delicate odour for miles around, recalling long-vanished days of youthful enjoyment among the fragrant harvest of the meadows.

Let us turn and plunge into the leafy shade of this large wood, which is now in the climax of its summer glory. There is not much variety of

tint—a dark, dense green, deepening in the far recesses almost to black. Except where a bluish haze hides the distance from the sight, the foliage is nearly all alike in hue. Here and there a gleam of sunshine breaks through, plays across the glade, and flashes upon the dark green mass of leaves like a gleam of firelight, intensifying the gloom by vivid contrast. Scarcely a sound is audible through the long shady avenues that remind one of cathedral aisles, radiating in all directions, and tempting our footsteps to explore their cool recesses. The birds are all mute, or rather they do not sing, but now and again you may hear a single strange note, and you listen in vain for its repetition, and are quite at a loss to what bird to ascribe it. Hark! there is the wood-pigeon's soft-cooing note, sounding like a plaintive lullaby:

Here Tray and I would often lie,
And watch the bright clouds as they floated by
In the broad expanse of the clear blue sky,
When the sun was bidding the world good-bye;
And the plaintive nightingale, warbling nigh,
Poured forth her mournful melody;
While the tender wood-pigeon's cooing cry
Has made me say to myself, with a sigh,
"How now nice you would eat with a steak in a pie!"

But if the birds are nearly silent, the insects are now in full song, and they abound in countless myriads. If you listen attentively you may hear the trumpets of the gnats that fill the green solitudes with a continuous surge of stilly noise which will haunt your ear the whole day. The gnats are not the only insects, however, for here comes bounding along at a great pace the large humble-bee, buzzing as he flies from flower to flower in search of honey; you may hear him for some time after he is out of sight, except when he happens to dive into some blossom to prosecute his labours, for so long as business is to be done he is perfectly mute. There is a wasp, too, who, like the enemy of mankind, is prowling around seeking whom he may devour. There are plenty of wasps' nests in this wood, and they appear to be swarming with inhabitants, judging by the numbers there are flying about. They are fond of making their nests beneath the gnarled roots of trees, in banks, and pollard willows. They have many enemies, however—rats, weasels, birds, not to mention "the lads of the village," who will blow up the nests for the sake of the "grubs," which are a killing bait for chub and most other river fish. In days long gone by we have borne off many a larva-laden comb, not, however, without carrying away also several wounds inflicted by the valiant and well-armed defenders.

Of butterflies there are many—more than we have space to set down; they fit by like winged blossoms; flowers of the air they might be, as relieved by the dense green background they flutter up and down the open glades. It was Haynes Bailey who sang—

I'd be a butterfly! living a rover,
Dying when fair things are fading away;

and, as we lie in the shade of a noble beech watching them, we feel half inclined to echo that wish. A butterfly existence is short, no doubt; but it

has every appearance of being happy. No bills to bother, no business to bore, no taxes calling at the door with red-lettered papers, no doctors with nasty potions. That flitting for ever from flower to flower, and "kissing all buds that are pretty and sweet," must be pleasant, and no—not wrong in a butterfly. It is his mission, his vocation, the aim and end of his ephemeral existence. And then, when tired of these pastimes, and the noon-day heat is at its fiercest, conceive creeping into the bell of a water-lily to take a siesta, lulled by the murmurings of the rippling stream, and to dream on the mutability of butterfly life. Yes! I wish I were a butterfly.

By-the-by, what a common habit it is with old and young, rich and poor, one with another, to indulge in vain and unattainable wishes. We all do it every day of our lives. The pretty young maiden, just budding into womanhood, and the pretty old lady with the silver hair, and her grandchildren around her, all give way to it. The old man, with more apathy than sympathy in his composition, and the young lover, "sighing like a furnace" for a sight of his lady-love, all practice it. We believe there is scarcely an article of woman's gear that some lover, tender and true, knowing the passion for dress which engrosses the heart of every damsel unattached, has not desired to become in order to enjoy the society and affection of his mistress. Our days of sympathy are past for this class of wishes; just at the present moment we feel much more inclined to sympathize with the worthy who

Wished he was a brewer's horse,
One quarter of the year;

his object in this equine transformation being

To turn his head where was his tail,
And drink up all the beer.

The grasshoppers are just beginning to raise their strident chirp, and assert themselves by reason of the harshness of their notes. A favourite poet of ours finds a charm even in the song of this insect, which we are fain to confess we never could discover. It is Keats who says—

The poetry of earth is never dead;
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the grasshopper's.

So long as the voice is only from hedge to hedge we have no great objection to it; but when it arises from every tuft of grass around you, setting your teeth on edge with the force of ten thousand garden gates, whose hinges want oiling, all swinging at once, it is then we protest against such music (?). It certainly requires more imagination than we possess to discern poetry in the chirping of myriads of grasshoppers. The croaking of frogs, we should say, has an equal claim to harmony—of the two we are inclined to prefer frogs. With skilful handling, however, the grasshopper is a most killing bait for trout.

The spring flowers have all disappeared, and a new floral world has sprung up in their place. We intended to have said a good deal about these wild flowers, but, with the garrulousness of age, we have chattered away on other subjects, forget-

ting the exigencies of space, and what we have to tell about them must be reserved for another time.

This month is sacred to St. Swithin, the patron saint of macintosh and umbrella-makers. This saint was a bishop of Winchester, and when he died he desired the monks not to bury him within the church, but in the open churchyard where the rain might fall upon his grave. This was done; but when the decree was issued for his canonization his wish was forgotten—or, perhaps, disregarded—and it was determined that the bishop's body should be exhumed, and carried with due pomp and ceremony to a more worthy tomb. The day appointed was the 15th of July; but when it arrived, how it did rain! The monks were too delicate to brave the storm—umbrellas had not arrived from the East and Macintosh was unborn. For forty days the rains descended and the floods came with unwonted fury, and all were ready to admit that Nature would not have thrown such a damp on their enterprise had not the removal of the saint's bones been contrary to the will of Providence; and so they were left undisturbed. But they were removed after all, about 100 years after, to a gold and silver shrine within the church, and without exciting any atmospheric disturbance. This is the foundation of the popular belief—

St. Swithin's Day, if thou dost rain,
For forty days it will remain;
St. Swithin's Day, if thou be fair,
For forty days 'twill rain no mair.

A LAST LOOK.

LINES ON A PICTURE.

One last fond look
Upon the dear old place, the hallowed walls
Of her once happy home, ere its fair halls
Plenty and peace forsook.

One tearful gaze
Upon her childhood's scene, whose careless hours
Were passed 'mid sunshine bright, and breath of
flowers,
Through the long summer days.

Fair summer days now fled,
The light of love and joy that o'er them shone,
With those who dallied in its sweet warmth gone;
The flowers forgotten, dead.

Only some roses left,
Sole relics of the garden fair and neat,
That now is but a wilderness complete,
Of all its charms bereft.

One last sweet rose,
Sad souvenir of that so cherished past,
She plucks, and on the loved scene looks her last,
Ere far away she goes.

Irresolute she stands,
With lingering feet that cannot take their way
From the old home, that ere another day
Passes to stranger hands.

Turn, maiden, turn
Thy footsteps even from this charmèd spot;
Go forth, and for thy joyous past let not
Thy young heart yearn.

But forward strain
Thy pensive gaze; for thee a golden store
The future holds. Than thou hast lost e'en more
Shalt thou regain.

Leave then behind
This mournful scene; look forward through thy
tears
To the new home, that in the smiling years
To come thou'l surely find.

A household bright
With love's glad sunshine, children at thy feet,
Whose voices fill thy life with music sweet,
Unto its peaceful night.

H. C. SESSIONS.

THE COLONEL KANTOROWICZ:
AN INCIDENT OF THE MARCH TO MOSCOW.

BY EDWIN WHELPTON.

L

THE great route into Russia lay through our village. The Grand Army, regiment after regiment, battalion after battalion, passed through it, presenting to our eyes broad masses of colour, flashes of light from bayonet and sword, as with resistless men the brave soldiers of the Great Emperor marched, to halt only at the word of command.

Day and night, the fires of the village smithy burned fiercely in obedience to the continuous blast of the bellows—at night, casting out into the darkness a reflection that extended many paces.

In ordinary times, horses were continually waiting to be shod, for the smith Isaac Salkowski furnished relays for the stages. Now that the French army was passing through, his fires were almost monopolized by the farriers of the French army, his own men often requisitioned. But the smith did not allow his mind to be vexed with the inconvenience, the French had made war to punish Holy Russia, so mis-named—ever the enemy of our unhappy Poland. It was a welcome labour, therefore, to further the Great Emperor in such a matter as shoeing horses. *La belle France* was ever the friend, and in ancient days the ally of brave and chivalrous Poland.

Under the same roof as the smith Salkowski, lived the carpenter Raczkinski, and in the house of her son-in-law, the carpenter, the widow Kantorowicz, helpless through infirmity and age, but her faculties still bright, her mind undimmed, had found a warm and welcome shelter. In the summer, she sat in the sun; in the winter, she had the warmest place by the stove. One night the carpenter, after securing the windows and thrusting the heavy bar of the door into its staple, sat down with the satisfaction of a man for whom

the day has been one of laborious peace, and to whom the night comes with a rich flavour of content. Smiling into the face of his beloved wife Ester, and not disregarding the advances of his two boys who roughly gambolled about his knees, the carpenter said:

"Thy mother will retire to rest, Ester, she sleeps."

The widow Kantorowicz was apparently sinking into a profound slumber.

"No, I do not sleep," cried the grandmother quickly; "no, no, I was thinking of Ulrich."

"Ulrich! always Ulrich! ah, good mother, Ulrich must have died long ago," the carpenter's wife returned sadly. Then turning to her husband, she said, "All the day has she been talking of Ulrich!"

"He is not dead!" cried the grandmother with startling earnestness, striking the floor impatiently with her stick. "He is not dead!" she repeated, "I am waiting to see him before I die, my poor boy Ulrich."

The carpenter's wife shook her head mournfully. "He would be a grown man, were he alive, little mother. Were he still living, surely by some means he would have conveyed the news to us?"

"So, so, yes, he lives," the grandmother reiterated; "the world is wide."

II.

ULRICH was one of the two brothers of Ester Kantorowicz, the wife of the carpenter Raczkinski. Poor were the parents Kantorowicz, but frugal and industrious. Happy were they if the summer's forethought and labour provided for the wants of the long winter.

Unlike his brother and sister, Ulrich was hot-tempered and wilful, and although he was of a generous disposition, his wilfulness often taxed the patience of his parents. It was now some twenty-five years since Ulrich had disappeared from his home. For some fault Ulrich was sent to school barefoot. In Poland or Germany, in the summer, it is not an uncommon practice for the children to wander out barefoot, but Ulrich was hot and hasty, the slight punishment rankled in his breast. When evening came, Ulrich was missed by brother and sister. They reached home trembling with fear. The woodcutter Kantorowicz out in the forest did not reach home until dusk. There he found his wife frantic. The night was spent in fruitless search and inquiry. The following day, the woodcutter walked many weary miles, not discontinuing the search for many days, anxiously seeking tidings, but returning at last utterly despondent and almost heartbroken. Ulrich was no more seen or heard of. The woodcutter mourned him as dead, his body lay in some deep pool, unburied in some ravine, or torn or devoured by wolves. Only his wife retained the hope that Ulrich was still alive.

Years passed, Franz, Ulrich's brother, sickened and died. Every one, excepting the poor mother, believed that now the woodcutter had but his daughter, that the unhappy Ulrich must be dead too, if he had not come to an untimely end at the period of his disappearance.

A few years later, the woodcutter died, and his

widow went into the house of the young carpenter Raczkinski, who had married the maiden Ester.

But rarely in the house was there any speculation as to the fate of the missing boy. It was a too sorrowful chord, though time in a great measure deadens grief. Ester, who was the eldest, always felt herself culpable allowing Ulrich to slip out of her sight.

The mention of Uncle Ulrich's name attracted the young ears of the children. Owing to the way in which their elders conversed of him, the children's minds pictured this Uncle Ulrich as still young. They could not believe him dead; their simple faith confirmed that of their aged grandmother, and she smiled tenderly upon them. Surely, thought they, some one would have brought tidings. Would it be possible for them to die, and their parents remain in ignorance? Had they ever strayed away some one was sure to know whose children they were; often the people had some knowledge of the story of Ulrich Kantorowicz.

"Once upon a time," such people would say gravely, "a boy strayed away, and was never found. He was the son of the woodcutter Kantorowicz. These children are the grandchildren of the widow Kantorowicz, who now lives with the carpenter Raczkinski."

What was more certain than these people's knowledge?

"Ester," said the carpenter after the grandmother had retired, "there are soldiers in the village; all the day their horses have come to the smith Isaac. There will perhaps be news; a courier may have passed through."

"Poor soldiers!" commiserated the carpenter's wife; "they will perish of cold!"

The carpenter rolled himself up in the sheepskin that had been worn by the woodcutter Kantorowicz, unbarred the door, and stepped out into the night.

III.

THE carpenter had not been gone more than half an hour when he returned. He entered his house, but did not speak, only his children observed that he had a smiling face.

"Any news, Franz? Have the French fought a great battle?" asked his wife quickly.

He did not reply, though his smile deepened.

"Little father, why are you pleased?" demanded the children.

Still he returned no answer. Silently he made his way to the foot of the stairs, then to the chamber above, and after a short time descended, attired in holiday garb. It was so unusual a proceeding, that in common with the children the mother was seized with a great curiosity. Still he vouchsafed no word, but opening the door sallied out into the darkness, still smiling.

"Franz, where art thou going?" cried his wife in vague alarm; but there came no response to her cry. So amazed was she at this extraordinary caprice of her husband's, she did not attempt to arrest the flight of her two children, who thrust themselves past her in hot pursuit of their father.

The children's feet carried them along so noiselessly, the carpenter did not perceive or hear them at his heels, moreover, he was too full of his own

thoughts to have an acute observation of things about him.

The village resounded with the tramp of armed men, the clatter of muskets, the roll of the drum. The breath of men and of horses could be observed issuing into the cold air. Since noon the village had filled with soldiers. Franz and Ludwig having been kept indoors by the cold pouring rain, had scarcely an idea of the commotion so near their habitation. The carpenter had noted the influx of horses into the smithy, but, attentive to his work, he had not suffered himself to be drawn away. Being a self-contained man, he had not spoken of it to his family until the evening.

The regiments the children had seen *en route* to Moscow had been beheld by them in the day; they had no experience of the effect of bodies of soldiers seen by the lurid glare of fires and torches. Now every house was deluged with light, every window illuminated, lending additional lustre to the brilliant uniforms of the French soldiers.

Still following their father, the children beheld him ascend a flight of steps leading to the mayor's house, every window bright with light, casting a glare on the white road. A sentry stood on either side the door. Franz and Ludwig noted that their father showed something to one of the sentries, and was allowed to pass on. The children's wonder increased. In their eyes the mayor was a great personage. What business could their father have with so exalted a functionary, and at such a time as this!

Then, the mayors of villages had many onerous duties; they had to sit up late in the night furnishing guides—at the call of the officers, who expected much attention. They had to give information, billet the men when necessary, or the horses. They stood in great awe of this military nation, whose soldiers proved themselves such terrible foes. It was terrible and dangerous to affront them. But the mayors of our villages gladly assisted them in every particular.

IV.

STILL the children pondered. What business had their father in the mayor's house. Where he was admitted—in their innocence the thought suggested itself—no exception would be made to them. With the confidence of childhood they hurried up the steps, but the sentries by gestures and the butt ends of their muskets, gently repulsed them, and assuming a stern air, bade them depart.

"*Que voulez-vous, mes enfants!*" deprecated they, muttering gruffly, but not unkindly. Their language was not so well understood by Franz and Ludwig as their gestures.

The children waited patiently, scarcely feeling the cold; they were too intent upon their father's reappearance. They stood without fear, the arm of Franz around the neck of Ludwig, and both looking up into the soldiers' faces, surveying their weather-beaten countenances with the curiosity, the fearlessness, the ingenuousness of innocence.

At last the carpenter issued from the mayor's house, and his eyes caught sight of his two boys standing below the stone steps.

"Ah, Ludwig! Franz, what do you here?" he exclaimed, in surprised tones.

They did not answer him. Taking each boy by

the hand, their hands seeking his, he led the way towards their home, without reproof or any token of displeasure.

"Franz, thou hast returned," cried his wife, with an air of relief; "and with thee, the children."

"Go, Ester," commanded he, "rouse thy mother; dress her in her best apparel." There was a forced calmness in his voice; although he spoke quietly, there was a strain indicating haste. In an undertone he added, "Command thyself, Ester; Ulrich, thy brother, has returned."

"Ulrich!" exclaimed she, in breathless tones, her heart palpitating, tears of joy welling in her eyes.

"Yes, so, Ester. Quick! beloved wife."

Struggling with her emotion, so that it should not get the better of her, that she might the better prepare the infirm and long-expectant mother for the joyful news, she ascended the stairs. But the grandmother, lying awake, had heard, or she discerned the intelligence in her daughter's eyes. With a cry she swooned away.

"I told thee, Ester, my boy Ulrich would return!" she murmured complacently, coming to herself. "Help me down quickly, he will be here soon."

v.

SCARCELY was she seated in her chair by the stove when there came a heavy preparatory knock at the door. The carpenter's family, their nerves strung to the highest pitch of excitement, and in a fever of expectation, though they were not unprepared, felt themselves terribly startled. The door was opened the moment after, faster and faster throbbed their pulses, when a couple of soldiers entered, wearing the brilliant uniform of the French Guard, followed by an officer gorgeously dressed.

The two women could scarcely repress a cry. The children clustered about their mother, awed by the martial appearance and clatter of the guard, and the bearing of the grand tall officer. The carpenter Raczinski stood tall and erect. The officer approached the grandmother with a grave air, he regarded her searchingly, his features relaxed, he opened wide his arms, and folded her in them.

"Thou dost know me?" he cried.

"It is Lilac!" screamed she in her delirious joy.

"Yes; it is Lilac! Lilac has returned!" answered he with great tenderness, tears of joy and repentance streaming down his handsome face as he embraced his aged mother again and again. "Canst thou forgive thy wayward Lilac?"

Lilac had been Ulrich's school-name, and had become so familiar his family were wont to use it as a term of endearment. In the old days more often he was called Lilac than Ulrich. The mother, with one bound of her memory, had returned to the day he disappeared.

Turning to his sister Ester, the soldier embraced her affectionately; and, grasping the hand of the carpenter, he said—

"Thou art a worthy fellow, Franz!"

He had some tender words for the children,

embracing them. "Thy children will be dear to me, Ester," said he.

The guard without was dismissed, and the long-lost Ulrich took his place among them, listening gravely to Ester's recital of the events of their life that had occurred during his absence. Again and again he reproached himself for the sorrow he had caused. He mourned his father's death; he had hoped to find him alive. Contrary to the usual practice, the children were not sent to rest at their usual hour; they were allowed to sit up late into the night to listen to the wonderful story of Uncle Ulrich's life.

He sat by the side of his aged mother, his hand in her poor thin trembling ones, all skin and bone, and dark blue veins. The children, becoming more intimate with him, standing about his knees, he regarding them affectionately.

"Franz, Ludwig—no Ulrich?" he murmured in a voice of sadness.

"We did not wish to lose another Ulrich," cried Ester, her voice still charged with hysterical joy; "it would have killed us."

"Heaven bless thee, I was a disobedient boy!"

"And now, Uncle Ulrich?" demanded the children.

"A soldier of the Great Emperor," returned he proudly.

"Thank God, thou hast been so fortunate," responded his mother, her eyes resting upon him proudly, upon his epaulettes, his gold lace, surveying his grand and noble air with the pride of possession in him. He was forgiven the moment he entered the carpenter's house. The mother's heart had never borne resentment.

"Now tell us of thy fortunes, brother Ulrich," said the carpenter.

VL

ULRICH'S STORY.

"You remember, my mother, my sister, how I left you. After an eventful journey I reached Berlin, footsore and weary. After several days spent in the streets of that city, suffering the privations of hunger every day, and every day becoming still more weary and dispirited, bitterly I repented my wilfulness and wickedness. I was afraid to return home, to retrace an arduous journey. When reduced to despair it was my good fortune to attract the notice of a rich lady. I was called to her carriage, and she questioned me, declaring me handsome and well-grown. When she discovered that I was indeed homeless and starving, without friends and so young, her heart was filled with compassion. She took me up in her carriage, and I was driven with her to her house. She sheltered me, and provided me with food and clothing. Being childless, eventually she adopted me, although for a time she had expressed her intention of sending me back to my parents in Posen. But day by day her goodness and affection increased, until I believe she came to dread a separation. I was sent to the gymnasium, and then to the university, where I gained some honours and the esteem of my fellows. But I was often unhappy, when one has committed a wrong, success or good fortune is not wholly satisfying. I felt myself unworthy.

"I will return to my parents and seek their

forgiveness,' I said time after time, but there always happened a something to divert me from my plan.

"When the war broke out, and many of Poland's children hurried to take service under the Great Emperor, I was fired with military enthusiasm. True to Polish instincts, I burned to be among my compatriots. I sought the permission of my dear benefactress to make the journey to Paris to enrol myself in the French army. After some reluctance she complied with my wish. She gave me a sum of money, and I got away from Berlin secretly. I carried letters of recommendation from her to several influential people in Paris. Shortly after I obtained the commission of a sous-lieutenant.

"I took part in several engagements, and was fortunate enough to attract the notice of the Emperor. He commanded me before the battalion as a young officer possessing talent, bravery, together with a fine appearance, deeming me worthy of advancement. My blood tingled at his words, I was more timorous than when under fire. I have not lost favour with the Emperor: I am following his fortunes in the present campaign. The army will conquer Russia and so restore Poland, or its soldiers will leave their bones behind. I now, beloved mother, hold the rank of a Colonel of Chasseurs."

When the Colonel Kantorowicz had concluded his story the night had far advanced. He had scarcely received any interruption, but when he ceased, the aged mother looked into his face, a tremor in her voice—

"Ulrich, my boy, shalt thou return?"

"I trust so, my good mother, but a brave man fears not death upon the field of honour."

"Oh, my boy, God have thee in his keeping," murmured she with fond solicitude.

"A courier from the front confirms the report that the Russians are still retreating. They must bow before the mighty Emperor."

"I am fearful, my boy, lest thou return not. There are so many dangers. The winter approaches, the frost, the cold, the snow."

"If I do not return, good mother, here is a packet, in it is a banker's receipt for a large sum of money lodged in Paris, which Ester's husband must present for you, his wife and children. Take care of the packet, in it are papers which will substantiate your claim. If I return, I can of course relieve you of that office."

It had reached far into the night when the Colonel Ulrich rose from his chair, and once more embracing the children and his beloved sister Ester, he held his mother long in his arms, and asked her blessing.

"The soldier must be at his post, the officer must be with his men. God bless and preserve you all!"

He tore himself away from them, and with averted head left the house, accompanied by the carpenter, who took leave of the Colonel Ulrich at the mayor's house, the carpenter receiving further instructions from him, how to prosecute the claim should he fall in the campaign.

news travelled slowly, and what news came was vague, unimportant and unencouraging. The Russians were still in retreat, the French yet advancing, but no decisive battle fought in which victory had crowned the French arms, gaining for the Emperor substantial results. A dreary march across a waste of snow. Then a rumour reached the village that the Russians had fired Moscow, that Napoleon had entered the city amid the flames, discouraged, overwhelmed with chagrin. That the French army was succumbing to cold and hunger, that it was in retreat, with the Russians behind, harassing the poor soldiers, mercilessly cutting off stragglers, threatening the Grand Army with entire destruction. At last, that the Emperor had abandoned his army, suffering his poor faithful soldiers to die of privation, of bitter cold. Leaving them to force their passage home in the face of insurmountable difficulties, frost-bitten, decrepit, perishing by companies by the way, comrade deserting comrade, the relentless Cossacks ever hovering on their rear, pillaging, swooping down like vultures on those who fell behind. Then came the news that the Emperor would pass through our village.

It was a hard winter. The snow lay knee deep, drifting across the roads until they became almost impassable. It was indeed a service of danger venturing out into the open country.

"The Emperor was coming!"

The report reached the village on successive mornings, and each day failed in its fulfilment. Again it was repeated, but carried no weight with it because of previous disappointments. He might make a *détour* where the roads were less blocked, some thought. Others, that possibly he was lost in the dreary waste of snow. The municipals had so often made preparations to receive him, that they had become careless and heedless of such rumours. Therefore they made no effort to be ready, moreover, now that he was not returning a conqueror, their enthusiasm had considerably abated.

The carpenter and his family had received all this miserable intelligence with grave apprehensions. What had become of the Colonel Ulrich?

"What has become of Uncle Ulrich?" the children inquired with hushed voices, comprehending the nature of calamity. Their elders could only shake their heads despondently.

The day or the hour when the Emperor might arrive remained a matter of uncertainty, whether he would stay in the village was problematical.

But late that very night there was a call for the smith Salkowski. Beyond the village a sledge had broken down. The journey could not be continued until it was repaired. The horses too were dead beat. The smith must be quick in having horses ready—there were penalties if the postmasters were remiss in their duties—and Salkowski's men must be expeditious in repairing the sledge. Three of the smith's men, Karel, Otto, and Stanislas, with the foreman buried into the smithy, the sledge was quickly overturned, the broken runner taken out and placed in the fire. The bellows blew the cinders to a white heat, and the smithy glowed from end to end. Napoleon with his aides-de-camp entered. The foreman recognized the Emperor at once, although he had never seen him before. There was no mistaking the cocked hat, the cape,

the breeches and boots of the little Corporal. Considering what personage he was, the foreman tinkled a little bell, used to summon the master when there was urgent need of his presence.

One of the aides-de-camp divining the smith's motive, struck the foreman peremptorily on the arm with the flat of his sword, as a hint for him to attend to the work in hand, and not arouse the house and collect the neighbours. The Emperor was in no mood to receive deputations, or have a crowd gathered about the smithy. But it was too late. The bell was heard by the smith. The room in which Salkowski and his family lived communicated with the smithy. In the door was a pane of glass so that the master could readily perceive what was going on in the smithy without opening the door.

The bell suggested to Salkowski that something unusual was occurring to summon him into the smithy; he hurried to the door and looked through the glass pane. One glance was sufficient. There stood the Emperor, his arms folded, his chin on his breast. To a Pole he was yet an idol. He had promised to dispossess those who had dismembered Poland, and to place it again in the list of nations. He was none the less worthy of regard now that he was suffering reverses.

The aide-de-camp, whose eyes were everywhere, observed the flash of light the other side of the pane, as suddenly obscured. The officer again made a curt motion with his sword, signifying that the would-be intruder must not advance nearer. Salkowski had not the temerity to enter, but he thought of his family, and more particularly of his neighbours, the Raczkinskis, who should not lose a sight of the great Emperor, deeply interested as they were in the campaign. First to his own stairs, then across the division of garden ground he hurried to the Raczinski's door, and knocked.

"Raczinski! Raczinski!" he cried.

The carpenter answered him, then the smith whispered, "The Emperor! Quick, Raczinski!"

Oh, it was a bitter cold night, but the carpenter's wife dressing hastily too, snatched her youngest son out of his bed, the carpenter having taken the other.

"Ludwig! Ludwig, my boy, thou too shalt see the Emperor! When thou art old, thou wilt remember. Thou wilt not forget to thy dying day that thou didst see thy Uncle Ulrich's Emperor."

All collected quickly in the smith's parlour. It was a bitter night, yet none felt the cold, not even the children in their thin night garments. The mother lifted her children up to the pane in turns, engaging their young minds by impressing upon them distinct peculiarities of the Emperor, his dress, his air, his attitude, so that they should retain a vivid recollection of him.

By this time the sledge was repaired, and fresh horses attached to it. The Emperor silently took his place, and his attendants followed suit. There was a shout to the horses, a whip cracked, and the Emperor with his suite vanished quickly into the darkness.

VIII.

In the two houses the ensuing day, the Emperor

was incessantly talked of, and conjectures were rife concerning the Colonel Kantorowicz.

"Uncle Ulrich was not with the Emperor, little mother?" murmured the children.

"Alas, no, children; he will follow after."

"He has perished in the snow," sighed the poor grandmother, heartbroken.

"The officers are mounted, and better provided against cold than the men," reasoned the carpenter to console her.

"He will deny himself."

In every heart the conviction was strong that the Colonel Ulrich could not have escaped the fate of so many brave unfortunate men, but each one fanned the flame of hope, if only to give the aged grandmother courage. With the hope faint, that had upheld her so many years, she was gradually yielding to the onslaught of the Destroyer. She had become quite bedfast and prostrate. Day followed day, and no news reached the village whereby she might be cheered, the carpenter himself became discouraged.

Weaker and weaker became the widow Kantorowicz, the oil of her life seemed burned out, the wick within the socket, the flame so faint, it became only a question of hours. An accident, a sudden shock, might cause her to relax her feeble hold on life. Night after night, the faithful watcher had seen the morning dawn, thankful that the long night was over.

A portion of the French army had entered the village in the night, the *avant corps* of a multitude to follow. Demoralized, ragged, footsore, shadows of their former selves, their few horses lame and decrepit. The light shining in the sick chamber of the widow Kantorowicz directed one who was on foot towards the carpenter's house. He knocked, and after a moment's parley was admitted by the carpenter. The weary soldier dropped into a chair exhausted with fatigue. Some food was placed before him, which he ate ravenously. His mind seemed to have suffered, he was vacant, forgetful, irritable, until somewhat refreshed, he to a certain extent, recovered himself. It was the Colonel Ulrich Kantorowicz.

In the thin, tattered, haggard man, the carpenter scarcely recognized his brother-in-law, the bold, handsome, defiant soldier, who was lodged so royally in the mayor's house.

"Pardon me, my good Franz, I am scarcely myself," he implored, his chin falling upon his breast.

"Thou needst not excuse thyself," said the carpenter compassionately, "thou shalt rest here. After some weeks thou wilt have more strength."

"No, I cannot stay here, my good Franz. Yesterday I learned the proscription. The Prussians, at the instigation of the Russian Ambassador, have issued, or shortly will issue, a proclamation against all Poles who have taken up arms against Russia. I may imperil thee, my good Franz."

"I fear not," said the carpenter bravely.

The Colonel Kantorowicz shook his head. "To-night, I must resume the march," said he, "I must not delay here, but I must see her."

"Thou art in the nick of time," rejoined the carpenter impressively.

The soldier scarcely comprehended Raczinski's meaning.

"She is at the point of death," the carpenter continued gravely.

"Let me see her then," demanded the soldier.

The carpenter at the foot of the stairs, whispered to his wife, "Ester, by the blessing of God, thy brother Ulrich has again returned. He is under our roof. Does thy good mother sleep? He comes to her."

"It is well," answered his wife with a thrill in her voice. "She is awake, she hears. He comes before it is too late."

Softly the weary soldier ascended the stairs. The widow Kantorowicz's eyes were glazing in death, yet in the last flicker of reason, she recognised her boy "Lilac" again. She was too feeble to reach out her hands, though her heart yearned to gather him in. He divined her wish. He bent over her, and kissed her mouth. Her lips were moving, but their accents were inaudible. He placed his ear to them reverently, and heard her repeating, to herself it might be, the verses of Simeon's psalm :

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.

Then the lips were silent, the eyes became fixed, the widow Kantorowicz slept the tranquil sleep of those upon whom great mercies have fallen.

It was Ester, who at last touched her brother. He was prostrate on his knees, with his head on the bed. He rose, and she led him from the death chamber with words of encouragement.

"Courage, brother Ulrich, courage!"

In the lower room he listened to the voice of consolation. He was bitterly repentant in that he had ever grieved a tender and loving parent. Then when he had become more composed, he embraced them all tenderly, received from them his packet, and a second time he tore himself from their arms, passed through the door, and disappeared to resume his march with a remnant of the Grand Army.

The brave Colonel Ulrich Kantorowicz never entirely overcame the effects of the hardships he had undergone. He was unable to follow his chief in that disastrous campaign which ended with Waterloo. He married a French lady of rank, and died childless in 1821; but he had seen to the worldly advancement of the children of his beloved sister Ester.

IN SHALLOW WATERS.

BY A. ABMITT,

Author of "The Garden at Monkholme."

PART III.—continued.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HEIGHTS OF CRINKLE FELL.

KATE read the letter twice, and turned it over in her fingers to be sure that there was no other, no relenting word. Then she looked at Jane, who waited near her.

"Has he—gone?"

"Very near three hours ago. He packed up his

bag, and looked at the railway guide. There wasn't a train from the station to-night, but the last coach hadn't gone to Oakdale. So he said he would take that, and go on from there by the early morning train. I made free to tell him he wasn't fit for such a journey, but he said he was quite well now, and out of the doctor's hands. He left those letters for you and Miss Leake, and another besides. This is the other. It's a big one."

Kate looked at the packet pointed out to her. It was carefully folded and addressed to the secretary of the geographical society. She did not know that it was endorsed, with paternal pride strange at the moment, "Prepared by my daughter, from notes supplied by me, and written in her hand."

This was the one service which he could boast that she had done for him, he could not send it out of his hands unrecorded.

"And has he actually gone?" Kate asked incredulously.

"Yes, by the last coach, as I said."

Kate looked out into the dusky valley, where the shadow of the mountains lay darkly. He had gone beyond the mountains, out of her reach, and she was left behind in the shadow. That day had held the key to her happiness; with the coming of night a door was shut in her face which might open no more.

She turned to Jane with sudden passion—

"Why did you let him go? He was my father!"

"Your father? I am sure we—none of us—thought of such a thing," answered Jane in amazement. "No one told us. But if we had known—begging your pardon—I don't see how we could have kept him here, when he wanted to go."

"No, no, of course you couldn't," Kate answered abstractedly. Already her burst of impatience was over; she had forgotten it, and was pondering on the possibility of doing something immediately, to put right this very wrong condition of affairs. She was not prepared to let her fate or her father take her at the first hasty word, and leave her to repent it for the rest of her life.

"Will you get some paper for me, and a light?" she said at last to the attentive and curious Jane.

When the necessary appliances were brought to her, she sat down, and scribbled the following note :—

"DEAR JACK,—

I am at Jane Dodd's. I came to see my father, and persuade him to go back with me. I find that he has *gone away*, to Oakdale, by coach. He intends to leave Oakdale by the first train in the morning. He told Jane so. Of course this must not be. I am going over to Oakdale now, by the mountain path. I know my way perfectly well, and shall be there in less than three hours. I shall come back with him to-morrow, or, if he won't come, I shall go with him wherever he goes. Certainly I will never come back without him. Aunt Susie does not know that I am here. If I send home she will be alarmed and do something foolish; so I am writing to you instead. I enclose a note left for her by my father. There was another for me. Will you take this to her, and explain what it means, and what I have done. Don't let her be frightened.

"KATE."

She gave this commission to Jack without the least hesitation, in spite of the unfriendly manner of their parting. It seemed to her at that moment a matter of small importance what Jack thought of her, and she was sure of his good-natured acquiescence in any wish she might express, his readiness to do any service she might ask from him. Their quarrel could stand over meanwhile until some more suitable occasion occurred on which to remember it.

She enclosed her own note and the one for Miss Leake in one envelope, and addressed the whole to J. Langford, Esq., Elmdale Hall. Then she gave them to Jane Dodd, and asked her to send them on to Mr. Langford in the course of an hour.

"I am going further up the valley," she said, for she knew that to express her intentions further would have called forth tiresome remonstrances.

She started from the inn with a quick step, anxious to get as far as possible before darkness set in. The road over the mountain was simple enough; the moon would rise in the course of an hour-and-a-half; she said to herself that she was committing no imprudence, and had nothing to fear.

When she left the shaded lane, and began to skirt the bare hill-side, she seemed to have gained a fresh accession of twilight; but soon she had to plunge into a gully down which a stream tumbled, and follow its course for some distance. The stream was hurrying down in swift swirls and sudden leaps, as if it had an enemy behind it which it desired to escape. But there was no enemy visible on the farther heights, only silence and solitude, and the solemn stillness of mountain masses revealing themselves from moment to moment as Kate made her way upwards.

She left the stream after some time, and turned towards the left, over the swell of the hill-side. When she had made the climb over this trackless rounded slope, she would dip downwards to a little sheet of water called Ill-Head Tarn. She would then have passed the highest point of her journey, and must make her way down a stony valley, with a stream for guide and company, until she reached Oakdale.

As she scrambled over the rugged breast of the mountain, she became aware that a little slip of feathery cloud, delicate as a bridal veil, and hardly larger, was streaming over the nearer top of Crinkle Fell. Behind her, the last faint light of sunset lingered in the sky; before her, in the east, were the masses of Crinkle Fell, and the little fluttering veil which might have been dropped by some heavenly messenger recently alighted there. The wind was from the east.

"It doesn't matter," Kate remarked to herself — as a dales-woman the significance of that little cloud coming up before the wind was not lost to her — "when once I reach Ill-Head Tarn I can't go wrong; I have only to follow the water down hill."

But the bit of gossamer on the crest of Crinkle Fell was proving itself elastic, and spreading rapidly over the mountain front. It was as yet thin enough to be seen through, and the gaunt ribs of the giant hill looked gaunter behind its white transparency, more rugged in contrast to its soft beauty.

Kate climbed onwards as rapidly as her limbs would take her. This part of her journey was the one for which she needed light. She must take

the curve of the hill at a certain point, or she would not find the little hollow leading down to the Ill-Head Tarn. If she turned too much to the right, she might lose herself among the stony buttresses of Lang Pike; if she wandered too far to the left, she would find herself on the heights of Crinkle Fell, with its precipitous front below her.

A stony mountain way seems longer, when it is being followed in a race with gathering clouds, than when it is leisurely taken in the pleasant light of a long summer day; and now the distances seemed strangely to lengthen out, and the far-off landmarks to retreat before Kate's hastening feet. The little mist on the summit proved to be the edge of a great and advancing cloud army. The mountain barrier had held it back for some time, but the crest once surmounted, it dropped heavily over in a rolling mass, plunged into the hollows, filled up the cavities, charged the buttresses, and rapidly covered the whole landscape with a white darkness.

Independently of its danger, the mist was not a pleasant incident in a mountain climb. It chilled the air, covered the clothing with moisture, and penetrated the lungs. Its effects were distressing as well as perplexing to the traveller. Outside the masses of mist, a faint moonlight was beginning to glimmer and take the place of departing day; inside, was chillness, blindness, and danger, and Kate was the only human being in the treacherous fleecy folds.

She made her way onwards bravely. When she started on her expedition, she had not realized that it might bring her into actual danger; she had been glad to face the mere loneliness and fatigue of the journey, that she might prove to her father what she could do for his sake. She hoped to convince him that, in spite of her despicable conduct that afternoon, she was no fine lady afraid to soil her clothes or tire her limbs on his behalf. Now it seemed that she had ventured into real peril for his sake; but she hoped yet to win his praise rather than his blame for her attempt.

It seemed to her after a time, as she continued to clamber over rocky hindrances which increased in size every moment, that she ought to be getting near the tarn; the ground should before this have begun to spread out towards the level top of the pass, from which she would drop to the edge of the water. Instead of that, the ascent was getting steeper, and the ground more broken. She began to fear that she had wandered too far to the left, therefore she turned a little towards the right now, hoping to remedy her mistake in this manner; and presently, to her great satisfaction, she found herself descending. But very soon the descent proved as much too steep as the ascent had been, and the downward scramble was so difficult that she was obliged to cling to the rocks with her hands in many places. She was more convinced than ever that she had wandered too far to the left, had climbed much too high, and would now have a very steep and difficult descent to make before she could reach the shore of the tarn.

It was an unpleasant situation, especially as she could only see the ground a few feet before her, and had no means of knowing whether she was only plunging into further difficulties by going further down.

HOME CHIMES.

At intervals the clouds became less dense, and wan ghosts of moonlight wandered through their folds. A moment came at last when Kate was standing on a ledge of rock, with her hand on a higher ledge, uncertain whether to go farther or to return upon her steps. A rift in the clouds gave a glimpse of a chilly blue light; the mist parted at her feet, and revealed to her—not the shores of the lonely tarn, but a dark hollow, lying hundreds of feet below, with broken rocks striking steeply down into it. She was not above Ill-Head Tarn at all, nor anywhere near it; she was on the upper slope of the precipices which formed the eastern front of Crinkle Fell.

There was no longer any doubt what to do. She must make her way upwards again while it was yet possible to her. Even in the daylight it is difficult to retrace the steps of a descent amid broken crags, which offer a different apparent shape from every different point of view: in the mist, she found it impossible to go back just the way she had come.

The rift in the clouds had closed again, and Kate could only choose her way step by step. Here and there the crags among which she climbed were separated by streams of shingle, treacherous bits of ground which she had to pass warily, because a slip there might have taken her far down, possibly over the edge of the lurking precipice below.

She was wondering whether it would be wisest to give up altogether, to sit down in the mist and wait until morning, when a little accident decided the question. She made a false step on the shingle, slipped, recovered herself, and with a desperate effort landed on a ledge beside it. But her ankle was twisted, and her hands were bleeding: it was impossible to go further. She crept to the back of the rocky shelf, sat down there, and prepared to be patient.

She was not sorry now that she had told Jack exactly where she was going. She supposed that it would do her no harm to remain where she was until daylight released her. Rest would remove the pain in her ankle and also restore her somewhat exhausted strength, and in the morning she could go on. It was very cold, to be sure, and decidedly unpleasant not to know how near she was to a precipice, or how difficult it might be to extricate herself from her present position. She was called upon to show endurance and courage; and she would try not to fail in these qualities—but she could not help remembering Aunt Susie's foolish tendency to anxiety with some comfort; she could not help hoping that her friends might not have accepted her departure with that philosophic calm which she had recommended to them.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT THE NIGHT BROUGHT.

LATE at night Henry Dilworth sat in the inn at Oakdale. There was no light in the room, and through the window he could see the water of the lake shining in the moonlight, and the trees black against its margin. Above them rose the massive lower limbs of Crinkle Fell and its giant comrades, but a white rolling mist hid their crests.

The road stretched past the inn, towards the lake in one direction, to the Langstone Pass in another. Coaches and pedestrians had long since left the highway deserted; and yet there was the sound of a horse's hoofs on the lonely road, and the horse was coming fast. When it reached the inn door its rider sprang from the saddle, and called out to the servant who advanced to meet him. "Has a lady come here over the mountains to-night?"

"No, sir, no lady has arrived at all since morning."

"Is Mr. Dilworth here—a gentleman who came by coach from Elmdale?"

Henry Dilworth stepped into the passage.

"I am here, Mr. Langford. Do you want me?"

"Is your daughter with you, sir?"

"Kate? No. I left her in Elmdale. I have not seen her since she went away with you."

"Will you read this, sir? And then we must look for her, if she isn't here. She started to follow you—from the Red Cow; she hasn't come back into Elmdale, and you see that the mountains are covered with mist."

Henry Dilworth took the letter and read; then he handed it back to Jack, and looked up at Crinkle Fell.

"Yes," he said, "the mists are on the mountain. She has not been able to find her way down."

He walked back into the passage, took his hat and stick and a travelling cloak, felt in his pocket for a flask which should be there, and returned to the door, where Jack stood giving information and directions to the landlord.

"Mr. Langford," said Henry Dilworth, "you will follow me as soon as you can, with the guides (there are two here that I've been talking to), lanterns, and a rope or two. I won't wait. I am going straight on."

"Impossible," said Jack, "you must not go alone."

"I'll take the dog with me," he answered, calling to a fine foxhound with which he had already made friends. "I know the mountain well. I shan't lose myself. I'm used to bigger deserts than Crinkle Fell."

He did not look a man with whose actions it was easy to interfere, as he stood erect in the doorway, an air of resolution bracing his limbs and animating his features; but Jack ventured on another remonstrance. Henry Dilworth did not wait to hear the end of it, he strode out into the moonlight, whistled to the dog, and disappeared in the shadow of the trees.

"We must lose no time in following him," said Jack, "he's been very ill, and is about as fit to be on the mountains as his daughter. Are they getting the things we want? And where are the men?"

Henry Dilworth's long strides were of a sort not easy to surpass. He was a trained walker, trained both to speed and endurance, and excitement brought back for a time his former energy. Without any hesitation he took the path to Ill-Head Tarn, and soon plunged into the mist clinging about the buttresses of Crinkle Fell. He felt sure that if Kate was lost on the mountain it must be somewhere beyond the tarn; from that landmark the stream was an unerring guide to the valley; therefore, until he reached the dark water, lying gloomily still among the crags, no

time need be lost in investigations to the right or to the left. He contented himself with whistling shrilly every few minutes, and listening for any answering sound through the mist.

When once he had reached the tarn and passed it, the position became more difficult and uncertain. He made his way onwards, however, in the path which she ought to have taken, uttering his signal-whistles as he went. It occurred to him, as the best thing to be hoped for, that as soon as she found herself perplexed in the mist, she might have sat down to wait for help; in which case she would not be far from the proper path. He soon found, however, that the mist was thinning before him; that, in fact, he was reaching the edge of it; for it did not extend nearly so far down on the west as on the east side of the mountain. It was certain, then, that Kate had gone astray in the comparatively short bit of ground between the edge of the mist and the shore of the tarn. She would already, he decided, have begun to bend to the left before she reached the mist; and she could not have wandered to the right afterwards without crossing a deep gully, where she could not have failed to perceive her mistake, and would undoubtedly have turned back again.

Therefore she must be looked for to the left, somewhere in that ascending slope which climbed to the precipitous front of Crinkle Fell. Henry Dilworth acted on this idea, and made his way to the left, up the mountain side. In spite of the thickness of the mist at this point he felt no danger of being lost in his turn. He had something of that sense of locality which has been attributed to dogs and other animals, a distinct consciousness of the direction in which he was looking, a keen memory for the turns he had taken, a close observation of any small indication in the ground around him.

He climbed, therefore, the steep and broken declivity, which he knew—as he mounted higher and left the tarn behind him—to be the crest of the dangerous upper slope of the precipices. These were down on his right hand, and on that side he felt the peril to be: for if Kate had wandered always farther to the left, she would have merely strayed down the grassy western slopes of Crinkle Fell into the valley above Elmdale; she would have met with no difficulty in that direction, and must soon have emerged from the mist in a spot whence she could easily make her way home again.

If, however, she had kept along the top of the ridge, she might still be far in front; or if she had discovered her error of bending too much to the left, and tried to remedy it by an abrupt turn to the right, she would have found herself on those upper slopes where every step led her into greater peril.

It was possible that she might have already made a false step, and fallen; but Henry Dilworth was too much accustomed to live in the presence of a possible catastrophe to let the probability of one take possession of his thoughts, when those thoughts could be better employed. He kept all his faculties fully occupied in looking and listening; he whistled often, and stood still at times waiting for a reply.

(To be continued.)

"DECLINED WITH THANKS."

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.H.S.

"DECLINED with thanks," are words which often disappoint the aspirant in the wide-field of literature. Works of the highest merit are frequently rejected by publishers, indeed, some of the most popular books in our language have gone the rounds of the trade without their merits being recognized. Frequently the authors, after repeated failures, have brought their books out at their own risk, and have thereby won fame and fortune. In works of fiction, perhaps the most notable example of a story which was offered to publisher after publisher only to be returned to its author, is that of *Robinson Crusoe*. It was at last "Printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship in Paternoster Row, MDCCXIX." It proved a gold mine for the plucky publisher. He made a profit of one hundred thousand pounds out of the venture. Jane Austen's name stands high in the annals of English literature; but she had a struggle to get her books published. She sold her *Northanger Abbey* to a Bath bookseller for the insignificant sum of ten pounds. The manuscript remained for some time in his possession without being printed, he fearing that if published that it would prove a failure. He was, however, at length induced to issue it, and its merits caused it to be extensively read. Samuel Warren could not prevail upon a publisher to bring out his well-known book, *The Diary of a late Physician*, and, much against his inclination, it was first given to the reading public as a serial in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Thackeray wrote his clever novel *Vanity Fair*, for *Colburn's Magazine*; but it was refused by the publishers who deemed it a work without interest. He tried to place it with several of the leading London firms, but all declined it. He finally issued it in monthly parts, and by it his fame, as a novelist, was established.

It will surprise many to learn that the first volume of Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales* was declined by every publisher in Copenhagen. The book was brought out at his own cost, and the charming collection of stories gained for him world-wide renown. The Rev. James Beresford could not induce any publisher to pay twenty pounds for his amusing volume, entitled *The Miseries of Human Life*. It was after some delay issued, and in twelve months it passed through nine editions. A humorous notice by Sir Walter Scott in the *Edinburgh Review* doubtless did much to increase the circulation of the book. The handsome sum of five thousand pounds profit was cleared out of this happy venture. In an able work by a leading American critic entitled *American Publishers and English Authors*, it is stated that "*Jane Eyre* went the round of the publishing houses of London, but could not find a market until the daughter of a publisher accidentally discovered the manuscript in an iron safe, where it had been lying until it was mouldy. She saw the extraordinary merit of the novel, and induced her father to publish it." The foregoing statement is incorrect. As a matter of fact, the manuscript was sent by rail to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., on the 24th August, 1847, and by the 16th of October in the same year, the firm

issued the novel. According to Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, the future publishers of *Jane Eyre* were at once most favourably impressed with the book, and this is fully confirmed by the prompt publication of it. Respecting its reception by the firm, says Mrs. Gaskell, the first reader of the manuscript was "so powerfully struck by the character of the tale, that he reported his impression in very strong terms to Mr. Smith, who appears to have been much amused by the admiration excited. 'You seem to have been so much enchanted, that I do not know how to believe you,' he laughingly said. But when a second reader, in the person of a clear-headed Scotchman, not given to enthusiasm, had taken the manuscript home in the evening, and became so deeply interested in it, as to sit up half the night to finish it, Mr. Smith's curiosity was sufficiently excited to prompt him to read it for himself; and great as were the praises which had been bestowed upon it, he found that they did not exceed the truth." The first novel Miss Brontë wrote was entitled *The Professor*, which was submitted to numerous publishers without finding one to accept it. It was not issued until after the death of the gifted author, and it is much inferior to her other books. Says Mrs. Gaskell, "Mr. Smith has told me a little circumstance connected with the reception of this manuscript, which seems indicative of no ordinary character. It came in a brown paper parcel to 65, Cornhill. Besides the address to Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., there were on it those of other publishers to whom the tale had been sent, not obliterated, but simply scored through, so that Mr. Smith at once perceived the names of some of the houses in the trade to which the unlucky parcel had gone, without success."

Sterne could not find a bookseller who would pay fifty pounds for *Tristram Shandy*, he therefore issued it on his own account and it proved a saleable work, gaining for its author a front place amongst English humorists. Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written as a serial for the *National Era*, an anti-slavery journal published at Washington. It was next offered to Messrs. Jewett & Co., but their reader and critic pronounced it not a story of sufficient interest to be worth reproducing in book form. The wife of the latter, it is said, so strenuously insisted that it would meet with a favourable reception that he advised its publication. In a notice of Mrs. Stowe, it is stated that in four years 313,000 copies had been printed in the United States alone, probably as many more in Great Britain. Miss Warner's popular novel, *The Wide, Wide World*, was declined by a leading New York publisher. It is said that several well-known houses declined to have anything to do with one of the most popular books of recent times, *Vice Versâ*, and even when in type two American firms did not discover its worth and rejected it.

Some notable books in history, travels, poetry, and science, have been "Declined with thanks." Both Murray and Longman were afraid to risk the publication of Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*, but Bentley brought out the book, and according to his statement it is the most successful work that he has published. A score of houses refused to publish *Eôthen*, and the author in his despair

handed his manuscript to one of the lesser known booksellers and printed it at his own cost, and it was extremely successful. After twenty-five editions of Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* had been sold, one thousand six hundred pounds was paid for the copyright, yet, strange to state, before it was published not a single firm in Edinburgh would pay a hundred pounds for it. Strahan, the King's printer, had offered to him the first volume of Blair's *Sermons*, and, after a careful perusal, concluded that the work would not be one to find a ready sale. Dr. Johnson, however, came to the rescue, and with his eloquence induced Mr. Strahan to pay a hundred pounds for the copyright. It had a large circulation, and for a second volume three hundred pounds was the amount gladly paid, and for subsequent volumes six hundred pounds each.

Sir Richard Phillips rejected several famous books. It was to this bookseller and publisher that Robert Bloomfield offered the copyright of his *Farmer's Boy* in return for a dozen copies of the work when printed. He feared it would be a failure and declined it. The poet issued it by subscription, and within three years 25,000 copies were sold. This publisher is said to have had offered to him Byron's early poems. He might have purchased the copyright of *Waverley* for thirty pounds, but declined it! He rejected other works which won favourable reception from the press and the public. It is only right to state that he gave to the world many valuable volumes, and that he was a man of decided literary ability. A paragraph went the rounds of the literary press after the death of Mr. J. H. Parker, the well-known Oxford publisher, stating that the copyright of Keble's *Christian Year* was offered to Joseph Parker for the sum of twenty pounds and refused. It was further stated that "during the forty years which followed the publication of this work, nearly 400,000 copies were sold, and Mr. Keble's share of the profits amounted to fourteen thousand pounds, being one-fourth the retail price." The brothers Smith desired to sell for twenty pounds to Mr. Murray their celebrated *Rejected Addresses*, but the great publisher declined the proposal with thanks. They resolved to bring out the book at their own risk. It hit the popular taste, and after sixteen editions had been sold, Mr. Murray paid for the copyright one hundred and thirty-one pounds. The poems yielded the authors over a thousand pounds.

Editors of newspapers and magazines have often made ludicrous blunders in rejecting poems of sterling merit. It is generally known that the editor of the *Greenock Advertiser* expressed his regret that he could not insert in his newspaper one of Thomas Campbell's best poems on account of it not being quite up to his standard. The Rev. Charles Wolfe submitted to the editor of a leading magazine his famous ode on *The Burial of Sir John Moore*, but it was rejected in such a scornful manner as to cause the writer to hand it to the editor of *The Newry Telegraph*, an Ulster newspaper of no standing as a literary journal. It was published in 1817, in that obscure paper with the initials of "C. W.", but was reproduced in various publications, and it attracted great attention. It is one of the best in our limited number of pieces of martial poetry.

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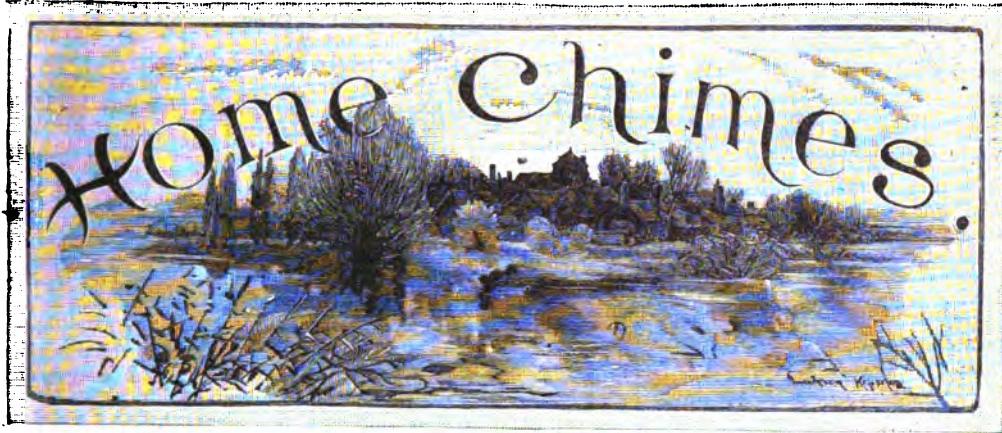
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EDITED BY F. W. ROBINSON.

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LONDON: JULY 18, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

A BOARDING-HOUSE ROMANCE.

BY "ROBIN."

BELLEVUE HOUSE was one of the good homely old-fashioned boarding-houses, in a little town that shall be nameless, on the coast of Devon. It had been established many years, and was justly and deservedly popular.

Year after year the same people came to it, to be received with welcoming smiles by the ancient chambermaid and head waiter, who had served the establishment so long as to look upon its credit as their own.

Perhaps part of its popularity was due to the extreme beauty of its situation, built almost on the edge of the cliff, with its own lovely grounds straggling down the steep slope, to the very edge of the calm water of the Severn Sea; surely few hotels or boarding-houses could show the like. What did it matter that it was a place far from a railway station, difficult of access, that the little town was dull as could be, no band, no public promenade, not even a lending library?

Was it not enough to satisfy any one to sit out in the calm, delicious evening under the verandah, or on the strip of smooth grass amongst the flowers. Such flowers never have I seen anywhere else—such carnations, deep rich red, and palest pink, and pink and white, giant fuchsias nailed up by the wall, great myrtle bushes, hugh hydrangeas and veronicas, and then beyond the little low ivy grown wall at the foot of the garden, and the pleasant sunny terrace beneath, the slope of trees, oak and elm, and everywhere the graceful outline of the mountain ash, with its wonderful clusters of coral berries, and beyond that again the blue, blue Severn sea, with here and there a little fishing boat dancing along, and faintly distinguishable in the distance the hazy line of the Welsh coast.

Yes, it was a lovely place. I had come here now for several years to spend my holiday, and was looked upon as quite one of the regular

habitues. I flatter myself that the jolly old proprietor would have quite missed me had I failed to put in an appearance about July or August, and the servants, from the staid head waiter down to the grinning "boots," nay, even the very ancient man who drove me out sometimes, always assuring me "he knew every inch of Devon," never failed to bid me welcome. It may have been only their pleasant South country way, but we appreciate these little bits of human kindness, especially when we have come to be lonely maiden ladies on the wrong side of forty.

I hope no one reading thus far will be frightened into supposing they are going to have a story of an "old maid." No, my little story I may have, like most of other people, but it is all over and done with long ago. Only I hope it has left me with a more tender sympathy for these wonderful young people growing up around us, who seem to our old eyes to have all the fair treasures we have missed within their grasp, and who yet so often will make just such perilous shipwreck of their life's happiness, as we perchance have done before them.

I am very fond of boarding-house life for a little while. It has its bad side no doubt, but it amuses me to study all the different people, to speculate on their characters, their history; to wonder whether that stout old officer, who is so particular about his dinner, and waxes so warm over politics of an evening, was ever in love, and indifferent to the flavour of his soup; or if that quiet old bachelor, who comes, like myself, year after year, and listens so attentively to the singing of an evening, has any tender memories behind his little formal cut and dried exterior.

As a rule, we get some very pleasant people at Bellevue House, and we manage to anfuse ourselves pretty well of an evening.

This summer I speak of the house was specially full. The long table was quite crowded, and at the *table d'hôte* they were obliged to have a small table in one of the great deep windows. Here I, arriving late one August evening, found myself

placed. The nights did not yet fall quickly enough to have the curtains drawn, and the view over the calm, shimmering sea, with a golden moon just rising from behind the shoulder of the great solemn heather-covered hill to the right, was simply perfect.

There were two other ladies at the table with me—a mother and daughter—wealthy people, as I supposed; and the girl was the most exquisitely pretty creature I had ever seen. She was so tall, so slim, so round, with such a fair, frank brow, such shining brown eyes, almost startlingly dark, with her bright hair and her fair complexion; such a sweet mouth, such dimples, my heart seemed to go out to her at once. And she was so charmed with everything, and so full of bright chatter.

Her mother was a great contrast; she was a little, plaintive, aggrieved-looking person—one of those people who, I think, take a kind of pleasure in being unhappy.

I made a few civil remarks to her, and she unfolded her grievances to me.

They had been there almost a fortnight I heard, and she did not at all like being at the side-table. She seemed to look upon it as a kind of slight.

"We do not get half attended over here;" she broke off to complain bitterly to the passing waiter, "This is the third time I have asked for vegetables." "Don't you think the attendance is wretched?" she repeated to me. "But I always notice ladies get no attention at a table by themselves."

Her daughter laughed, and I consoled her by pointing out that there was another place laid, and that it might possibly be for a gentleman. Several had come by the coach.

She brightened up at this, and had just commenced to ask me if this was my first visit to Devonshire, when I saw a waiter showing a gentleman across to us.

He was an odd-looking man—a very odd-looking man somehow—tall, and largely made, with a rugged, fair face, very wide-open blue eyes, and a fine head, held very high. Somehow he was not like the usual run of our visitors, and, strangest of all, he brought in a dog with him—a handsome pug, if any pug can be called handsome—who preceded his master up the room, his wrinkled nose sniffing the air, and his crooked eyes looking in every corner.

Now, like most maiden ladies, I must confess that I am very nervous of strange dogs, and this special one had certainly a most ferocious-looking countenance; I drew myself back into my corner as far as I politely could, as the creature gave a little sniff at my skirts. The stranger did not seem to take much notice beyond saying, "Lie down, Jack;" he was occupied in giving his orders to the waiters, who certainly did seem galvanized into greater activity.

I looked at my pretty girl. Her face was all dimpled and flushed.

"The dear old doggie. Do let me hold him for a little while; I am so fond of dogs."

Her mother moved uneasily and protested feebly—

"Alice, dear."

The stranger turned and look at her.

"Thank you so much," he said. "Do you really like dogs? Most ladies are afraid of Jack."

Did I imagine it, or did his full blue eyes light on me for a moment?

"But he really is the most harmless creature. Come, Jack, come and speak to this lady."

Jack seemed nothing loth. He put his front paws on the girl's dress, and locked up at her with his foolish blinking eyes, while she stroked his head, and talked to him in dog language.

"Alice, don't you think you had better eat your dinner?" suggested her mother feebly.

"I have finished, thank you, mamma, and see how happy he is. He likes being with me."

"I have never seen Jack take to a stranger before," said his master.

He did not attempt to pay the girl a compliment as a young man might have done. He was quite middle-aged, older than myself as I judged, and had got beyond all that kind of thing.

He made himself very pleasant, but I could see that Mrs. Verinder was a little suspicious of both him and his dog.

"So odd to bring a dog to dinner," she confided to me as we left the room. "I don't think it ought to be allowed."

Our drawing-room was a very pleasant room, running the whole length, or rather breadth, of the house. It had two long windows at the end facing the sea, and two very deep bays, like rooms in themselves—the pleasantest places in the world for writing letters, or chatting with ones special friends—at the side, looking out over the heather-covered hill, the beautiful far-reaching moor with all its wonderful changes of light and colour.

There was a kind of unwritten law in our house that we had music until the tea-bell rang at nine, after that it was the turn of the whist players. The gentlemen did not as a rule make their appearance amongst us much before tea. There was a billiard-room with a delightful verandah over the sea, where they were wont to congregate; but this year it seemed to me they had found an attraction superior to billiards or tobacco. One after another they came dropping in, until Alice Verinder, at the piano, had quite a little crowd about her. There were two young gentlemen especially I noticed, I had seen them looking a great deal in our direction at dinner. A tall dark Cambridge young man, with a nice clever face—a great mathematician I heard afterwards he was—and a melancholy-eyed young Oxford undergraduate. Poor young men, it was easy to see the room held nothing for them but that bright girl's face.

"Some day, some day, some day we shall meet," Miss Verinder sang. I remember just how she looked; I could not wonder at the passionate admiration in the young men's eyes. Old woman as I was, I found her a pleasant sight.

"A sweet voice and a sweet face," said some one beside me. It was our neighbour at dinner. He had come softly across the room, holding his dog's leash. He stood a moment by me, and then he sat down behind the piano, took his dog on his lap, and threw back his great head, listening with evident enjoyment to the music. I thought again what a strange-looking man he was. Miss Verinder finished her song, and turned round with all the pretty light on her face. He crossed over then and thanked her, while the young men looked rather superciliously at him.

"I felt sure you had a singing face," he said. "Are you well off for music here?"

"Not very," she told him, and then she asked if he played.

"Yes," he said. "It is almost the only solace I have." He paused a moment, and then went on in such a low, hopeless kind of voice. "I am almost blind."

"Oh! I am so sorry."

Poor man! I thought it ought to be a kind of compensation to see the sweet tenderness of the bright young face, to hear the soft pity of her voice. He said something—I did not catch what it was—and then he sat down to the piano.

Play, I should think he did play. Never had there been such music brought out of our piano. A great hush fell upon the room. Even those who did not care for music for its own sake, were silent from astonishment.

As for Mr. Gorst himself, the music seemed to transform him. He shook back his hair, and his grave, plain face brightened up.

"Jack," sitting at his feet, kept his eyes steadily fixed on him, as if he understood it all; and as for Miss Verinder, the pretty colour grew brighter in her cheeks, and her eyes shone. She was passionately fond of music.

"Odd man! Don't you think so? very," whispered Mrs. Colquhoun—the greatest gossip in the house—to me. "Not a gentleman, decidedly; actor, I should think; professional, certainly. Dreadful flirt that girl is to be sure. Do you admire her? No, surely not."

I held up my hand to silence her. I did not like Mrs. Colquhoun. I knew her mischief-making tongue of old, and I had caught a flash from Alice Verinder's soft eyes.

Mr. Gorst was going to sing for us. As he played the first bars of "The Message," Jack gave a kind of strangled howl.

"He is wonderfully fond of singing," his master explained with pride.

Clearly, I thought, he was a thorough old bachelor, and this dog was wife and child to him.

Well, I have heard many fine voices, but never one, I think, like Mr. Gorst's. As the passionate beautiful words of "The Message" rang out, I felt my very heart stirred within me.

I cried in my passionate longing—
Has the earth no angel-friend,
Who will carry my love the message
That my heart desires to send.

A great hush fell upon the room as he finished. One could well believe such a voice would "pass through the golden gate." I saw a strange moved expression on Mr. Hardynge's face, the quiet old bachelor I have mentioned before; and as for Miss Verinder, I did not like to look at her; I knew there were tears in the bright young eyes.

And after "The Message," he gave us "For Ever and For Ever," and "The Distant Shore." He would have sung all night, I think, if the loud clang of the tea-bell had not sounded out, bringing us all back to the world around us.

He dropped his hands from the keys quite startled.

"Oh! it's only the tea-bell. Are we expected to eat again? But I have inflicted myself upon you!"

"I could listen for ever," said the girl, with that soft, lovely light still on her face.

I am a foolish old woman, I know; but I

caught myself hoping he was not too blind to see it.

"Miss Verinder, will you not let me get you some tea?" broke in the Cambridge man, Mr. Hoare, as I found out his name was. He had been watching the changes in the girl's face all through the singing.

Well, he was old enough to be her father, and he was almost blind, and was grave and odd-looking beside, while she was the sweetest, freshest bit of maidenhood. Young even for her twenty years. And yet somehow those two, Mr. Gorst and Alice Verinder, were drawn to each other that very first night, I think. Perhaps it was Jack, perhaps it was the music, or that the child's sweet womanly heart was moved to pity the lonely afflicted man. She was so watchful of him at meal times, would try in her pretty way to interest him, to drive the shadows from his face; would pay him such sweet deference. He was always quiet, always silent and reserved. It did not seem to me he took much notice of what would have raised a young man to the seventh heaven of happiness. I came on them one morning out amongst the flowers—he walking up and down slowly and carefully, as an almost blind man does, she springing out in her joyous way, fresh as the morning itself, in a dark blue gown all ruffled with embroidery, a wide hat shading her sweet face, the sunlight on the mass of crisp hair beneath. They said "Good morning" to each other, and then she spoke to the dog.

"Jack" never seemed a very responsive animal. He just suffered her caresses; his master rebuked him.

"Come, Jack, you know this lady is your first friend in Devonshire. You ought to be very nice to her. I think Jack has never got over his surprise at your kindness. He is like myself, not a demonstrative person; but I think he feels it if he could express himself. He is accustomed to ladies shrinking and shrieking when I bring him into the drawing-room."

"But it makes such a difference to be brought up amongst them. I love dogs, and Jack is such a dear fellow," she said.

"Yes, he is a good dog; I could not do without him; he is my only friend. I do not absolutely want him yet for a guide, but I am getting into training for that time; it won't be long. I think he knows all about it."

Again I saw the sweet compassion in the girl's face as she looked at him. And just then her mother came out, calling her. They had made up a little walking party, and were going to lunch up the hills. Mr. Hoare was going with them, of course; he was a great botanist, as brimful of facts about the vegetable world as the Oxford undergraduate was of everything relating to church architecture.

Between her two admirers, Miss Verinder ought to have acquired much useful information during that sweet summer holiday. Young Hoare took possession of her at once. I heard her blithe laugh as she answered some remark of his. They made a handsome couple, I thought; she so fair and slim, he so tall and dark and broad-shouldered, and both with that wonderful light of youth on their faces.

"He is a handsome fellow," Mr. Gorst said, and

I knew he had divined my thought; he was wonderfully sharp, for all his blindness.

Well, the sweet August time drifted on, with long sunshiny days, with lovely moonlight nights. Never had there been such a season, never had our boarding-house been so full, the guests so well satisfied. We had picnics up the hills or down on the shore, drives for the old people, loiterings out in the moonlit garden for the young, delicious evenings of music for everybody.

For the first time within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, the unwritten law of the house was broken, and we had singing after tea as well as before. The whist-players grumbled a little at first, then they subsided into distant corners and apparent contentment; the odds were against them. The very waiters used to linger outside in the hall, or make errands into the drawing-room of a night.

Only Mrs. Colquhoun seemed set against the whole thing; day after day her venomous tongue was at work, dropping little spiteful insinuations, whispering little half-veiled scandals. She and Mrs. Verinder were a good deal together at this time. She really could be an agreeable woman when she liked, and when one did not have too much of her. But she always reminded me of a barrel-organ wound up to the same set of stories and remarks, accounts of her husband's last illness, during which the poor man seemed certainly to have suffered every ailment flesh is heir to; little highly-flavoured anecdotes of every one in the boarding-house.

For my part, while trying always to be polite, I did my best to avoid her as much as possible. But Mrs. Verinder, always plaintively troubled about something, seemed quite to enjoy her society, to accept her views of things as correct, at least when Alice was not there to flash out in defence of people. They would sit together by the hour, some days, in one of the big bay windows, or out in the garden, and I noticed after every one of these confidential talks, Mrs. Verinder took a little fit of watching her daughter with uneasy eyes, and calling her to her side, and reading her little lectures.

"Darling child," she sighed to me once, "She is a great charge, having no father, and she is so fond of her own way."

"And a very good way I am sure it is," I said heartily, at which she brightened up a little.

It was evident to me as the sweet sunny days drifted on, that a crisis of some kind was imminent amongst our young people. The lessons in botany and church architecture had been going on every day with unremitting briskness. The two young men glared at each other more than ever, tried harder than ever to render little services to their enchantress. And she took it all as a matter of course, sharing her sweet smiles and pretty words between the two, with such perfect impartiality, that even I, who watched her so closely, could not detect if she had a shade of preference for one above another.

And yet she was not the least bit of a flirt, in spite of that illnatured Mrs. Colquhoun, only she was so pretty and so sweet, love and admiration came natural to her.

Poor young fellows, they were evidently very desperately in love. They were even a little

ludicrous sometimes in their infatuation, but I am rather a sentimental old woman, and have a very weak side for young people. And these were both such nice pleasant gentlemanly young fellows, well bred, well educated, and sufficiently well off, courteous too, even in their bitter jealousy of each other.

Unfortunately neither of them was musical.—I used to think they must feel it very hard as night after night, Alice and Mr. Gorst shared the piano between them; but I daresay after all they did not mind very much. They could always sit and listen to her, or look at her sweet changing face; and think they were even glad that, as they could neither of them monopolize her then, she should have such a harmless companion as Mr. Gorst. It was not possible to be jealous of him.

Young people always confide in me. I have heard dozens of love stories, and before a week was over Mr. Hoare and young Methuen had told me all their trouble, and I had listened to many rhapsodies on Alice Verinder's perfections, coming back always to the same question:—Did I think she could ever care the least little bit in the world for them? How should I know? The ways of girls are incomprehensible, but I thought she might very easily, especially for Mr. Hoare. He seemed to me to possess every quality that might be supposed to win a girl's heart, and true love is so little plentiful in this work-a-day world of ours, that to us, who have passed by the golden time for inspiring it, it seems the cruellest pity any should be wasted.

And so I gave what sympathy and counsel and encouragement I could to each, even going so far one day as to sound Alice about them. She and I were great friends by this time.

"Yes, they were very nice, very nice indeed," she said, with a dreamy far-away look in her sweet eyes. "She liked them both very much indeed."

That "both" was fatal. I was no nearer discovering the truth than I had been before.

I had been a month at Bellevue House, and my holiday was drawing to a close, when at last our beautiful summer weather broke, and we had a day or two of incessant rain. It was a pity but we could not complain. We had had a perfect month, and it was no great hardship to sit in our pleasant drawing-room for a little while.

I resolved to get all my arrears of letter-writing done. I had neglected my friends sadly since I had been here, and so I brought down my desk and settled myself in one of the bay windows for a regular morning's correspondence. Mrs. Colquhoun was there too, I was sorry to see, but at present she was deep in her newspaper, and I trusted she would find sufficient scandal there to occupy her mind for a little while, at least, to the exclusion of her neighbours. And presently, just as I had opened my desk, Alice Verinder came and sat on a low stool beside me, she looked so fresh and sweet, with a bunch of rain wet carnations I had just seen the head-waiter picking for her, in the bosom of her grey dress.

"I will not interrupt you, Miss Brown," she said. "Indeed I am not going to talk, only it is so nice and quiet in here."

I smiled a little, for I had an idea Mr. Hoare

meant to put his fate to the touch to-day, and that she was keeping near me for protection.

But what could I do? I supposed the young man would find out a way to see her, if he had a mind, and so I told her I was very glad to have her, and went on with my writing. And she nestled herself behind the folds of the great curtain, and settled down to her novel, at least she had "The First Violin" open on her lap, but I noticed she never turned a page, and once, looking up at her, I saw that she was looking out over the rainy sea with a dreamy, far-away expression in her sweet eyes. Her own love story, as I judged, was proving more absorbing to her just then than the most thrilling romance ever written.

Often, when I sit writing letters now on a wet day, with the rain dashing up against the windows, the memory of that morning comes back to me.

I scarcely knew how long I had been writing. It was a letter to a dear old friend of mine, and I had for a little while forgotten my surroundings, when Mrs. Colquhoun's wearisome voice forced itself on my attention.

She had exhausted her newspaper, and Mrs. Verinder having just come in, she had a thrilling piece of gossip to unfold to her.

I tried in vain to abstract myself; she would be heard. The great peculiarity about Mrs. Colquhoun's lowest and most confidential communication was that it compelled attention. I have heard her right across the room whispering, as she fondly imagined, one of her little stories, and so it was now.

I must listen whether I liked it or not.

"Quite shocking, Mrs. Verinder! I was so frightened I could not sleep again. Mr. Gorst, you know, he came down the corridor last night perfectly drunk, stumbling over everything. He tried to burst into my room, but fortunately I always keep the door locked; and he felt about his room and talked to himself half the night. Quite shocking, is it not? These professional sort of people are always unsteady, and being blind seems to make it so much worse. Really, Mrs. Verinder, don't you think we ladies ought to take some steps to show what we think of such conduct?"

Mrs. Verinder made some feeble sound of horror. I was too petrified to say anything.

If this was a story, it was rather a worse one than usual; if it was true—

But what was this indignant young figure that started up from my side?

"It is not true, mother—I am sure it is not true. Oh, it is a shame to tell such stories of any one! Mr. Gorst is a gentleman; he would scorn to do such things. Oh, it is cruel! People ought to spare him at least."

The child looked transformed, her cheeks blazing, her brown eyes sparkling.

"Alice, Alice!" said her mother.

"It is the injustice of it, mother—that is what I mind."

Mrs. Colquhoun was straightening her spectacles and looking up at the indignant girl with a malicious smile.

I knew what a story she would make of this, and, though I could not but admire Alice's generous championhip, I felt sorry she

should have drawn this woman's unscrupulous tongue upon herself.

She was still standing there, with her tall young figure drawn up, and her scornful face, and Mrs. Colquhoun had just opened her lips for a crushing retort, when behold standing amongst us Mr. Gorst himself, perfectly calm and unmoved to all outward appearance.

Had a thunderbolt fallen amongst us, we could not have looked more astonished. Mrs. Colquhoun's face flushed crimson, as well it might. Poor, pretty Alice grew snow white, and all the fire went out of her eyes.

"I cannot thank you sufficiently, Miss Verinder," he said, "for taking the trouble to defend me. Pray let me apologize," he went on then to Mrs. Colquhoun, "for having unintentionally heard so much about myself. I was writing letters in the other bay, and had no intention of listening, when my own name caught my ear. It is a fulfilment of the old proverb; but I have no doubt you will be greatly pleased to hear you have made a most unfortunate mistake. My room was changed last night; the gas was not lit; my luggage was all about in the middle of the floor. In my half or three-quarters blind condition, I certainly did stumble a good deal about, and had also to speak a great deal to my dog through the night; he is always restless in strange quarters. As for being drunk, I have been a water drinker all my life. I must express my great regret for having so disturbed your rest, but I am sure your distress of mind last night must be more than compensated this morning by your relief at finding out I am not such a depraved character as you had feared."

He was laughing at her, of course, but his face was perfectly grave and composed. Mrs. Colquhoun was stammering something about being "so sorry."

"Pray don't mention it," he said with quiet courtesy, "only I hope you will remember for the future that it is not always wise to draw conclusions until we are very sure of our facts;" and with a bow to us all he went back to his letters.

Alice had escaped out of the room before he had done speaking. I thought the child seemed even more overwhelmed at having been caught defending him than Mrs. Colquhoun was at running away with his character.

Well, it was an absurd enough little incident, and yet, but for it, I sometimes think certain other things might never have happened.

It was later on that afternoon, the rain had cleared away, and the sun was shining out again. That "clear shining after rain" that is so beautiful. I thought I would go for a little brisk walk before dinner, up by the moor. I liked to see it after rain, with all the lovely drifting lights and shadows over the heather. Alice Verinder sometimes came up with me here. She was fond of it too. I looked for the girl, but could not see her anywhere, though I perceived young Hoare smoking his cigar in the garden, with rather a gloomy expression of countenance. Mr. Methuen had gone to church.

However, I did not dislike a walk by myself, and I stepped out briskly through the little town, and round the narrow path at the foot of the hill, that led to the outskirts of the moor.

It was a very narrow path, just room for two people to walk very close together, consequently, I suppose, it was called the "Lover's Walk." There were seats at intervals, and it had many unexpected turns and twists, as it wound round the hill.

Coming suddenly round one of these sharp corners, what or rather who did I see just in front of me only a few yards away! Alice Verinder and Mr. Gorst; and he was holding both her hands in his, and bending over her, the inevitable "Jack" sitting beside them, his foolish tongue hanging out, his leash lying unregarded on the damp ground, an expression on his face as if he would say "this is a nice piece of business." Well, I take great credit to myself, I neither started nor screamed; luckily neither of them had seen me, and I turned swiftly round the way I had come, hurried round the corner, almost ran the whole way home, never stopping for breath until I found myself safe in my own room, where I sat down to think over what I had seen.

To say I was surprised is to say nothing—I was thunderstruck. And yet looking back over the last month, was I not a stupid old woman not to have thought of it before? A thousand little things came back to my mind now, that I had taken no notice of at the time.

But who could ever have supposed it. A rugged, middle-aged, grey-haired man, blind too, without any special attraction that I could see, except perhaps his music. And she that might have had her choice of those two nice young fellows.

Ah! well, it was incomprehensible to me, I gave it up in despair.

It was an hour or two later, and I was still sitting in my room, but ready dressed for dinner, waiting for the bell to ring, when there was a little tap at my door and Alice entered radiant, blushing, happy. I remember just how she looked, in a pretty dress of some pale shining green stuff, she always dressed so prettily, with a square cut bodice, and elbow sleeves showing her fair round arms, a bunch of white roses in the lace at her bosom. She stood looking at me for a moment, and then she closed the door, and crossed the room swiftly, and came and knelt beside me.

"I saw you to-day," she said softly "and you turned back because you saw—us."

How can I describe the sweet radiant light in her face? I bent down and kissed her.

"My dear," I said to her, "Are you sure of yourself? Do you really love him?" But there was no need for an answer. I could read it in her eyes.

"Oh! Miss Brown, I am so happy, so happy. Do you think," she said, then with a little wistful trouble in her sweet face, "that I will be able to make him happy, that I can help to make up to him for all his troubles."

"My dear," I told her, stroking her bright hair, and feeling tears not far from my foolish old eyes, "you will make him the happiest man in England."

"And only think he was going away, and would never, never, have told me; if it was not for to-day, and that horrid woman. Oh! Miss Brown, I am a happy, happy girl."

Well that is the end of my little boarding-house romance, there is not much more to be said about it now: never I suppose had anything

happened at Bellevue House that created a greater interest and excitement.

What Mrs. Colquhoun thought I do not know; she went away early next morning without a good-bye to any one. I wish I could think she had had a lesson about gossiping, but I am afraid she is only furnished with a fresh budget of stories, to regale her friends in her next place of abode. And the two young men went away together on a walking tour a few days afterwards. They were very miserable, no doubt; but still I think not quite so wretched as one would have been had Alice chosen the other. "I always knew she was the sweetest girl in the world," young Hoare said to me before he went, "and has she not proved it now by devoting her life to that fellow; if she is only happy what does anything else matter, my shoulders are broad enough I hope to bear a little disappointment."

Poor young fellows, I felt very sorry for them both, but some one must be left out in the cold in every love story; and, after all, they were friends with each other again, and young enough to walk off their troubles and have many other sweet-hearts.

Mrs. Verinder was the worst of all. She was very tearful and plaintive at first.

"Old enough to be her father, and blind, she that might have married any one," she wailed. But after a few days she grew more resigned.

"Alice was bent on sacrificing herself, and she would have her way," she confessed to me. I think it tended greatly to her comfort to hear that Mr. Gorst, in place of being a "professional" or a suspicious character of any sort, was of a very good family, tolerably well off, and had a nice old place in Northumberland.

For every one else, I think there was no one in the house, from Mr. Hardinge down to the youngest waiter, but sympathized with these lovers; every one had a good word and a good wish for them as they went about, always together now—Jack's office was a mere sinecure—the radiant-eyed girl and the blind almost elderly man, with that new look of proud happiness on his grave face.

It says something for human nature that all hearts are touched and softened by a story of true love.

All this happened twelve months ago, and I am spending my August holiday now in Northumberland with Mr. and Mrs. Gorst. They have a delightful house, and are, every one says, the happiest couple in the world.

It does one good to see them together: Philip Gorst's pride and delight in his lovely wife, all the sweet tenderness she lavishes upon him. He is quite blind now; but I do not think he misses his eyesight, except that he cannot see his wife's beautiful face. She is always with him, always at his hand. They sing together, walk together, do everything together. Their life seems incomplete out of each other's presence.

"Mother is quite devoted to Philip, now," Alice tells me one evening, with her sweet eyes shining; "I knew she must like him. There is no one so good as he is in all the whole world. I often wonder what I have done to be so happy."

Her husband laughs at her sometimes, and tells

her that it was her notice of Jack that first evening that won his heart.

I have said they are the happiest couple in the world; but I think my husband and I are just as happy, in our own sedate way. Yes, I am married! You cannot be more surprised than I was myself.

I had packed up my trunks that wonderful autumn to leave Devonshire, and was taking a last walk in the garden, thinking some foolish and rather sad thoughts, when Mr. Hardynge came out and joined me.

He did not say much, but it was to the effect that we had seen each other now for the last few years; that we were both lonely people, and that he thought we might each be happier if I would trust my future to him and marry him.

And I did. People laughed a little, I suppose, as they always do laugh at elderly marriages. But as John said, "Why should we mind?" We have been six months married now, and I have got over my first surprise at finding myself mistress of a delightful little house, and seeing "Mrs. Hardynge" on my letters. My husband is the best of men. I could make you another story out of all his goodness and kindness and thoughtfulness.

But here he is coming to look over my shoulder, to see if I have nearly done; and it does not do even for the "best of men" to be praised too much.

So with a true wish that all holidays may turn out as well as ours, that all love stories may have as good an ending, and all married people may be as happy as my sweet, true-hearted girl and her husband, or even John and I, in our own humdrum way, I make haste to finish my little "Boarding-house Romance."

IN SHALLOW WATERS.

BY A. ARMITT,

Author of "The Garden at Monkholme."

PART III:—continued.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XII.

A LOVE GIVEN TOO LATE.

HENRY Dilworth was already more than a mile from the tarn when he fancied that a faint voice answered his signal. The dog, who had kept close to his heels, sniffing the mist suspiciously, now plunged down the rocks to the right, and Henry Dilworth took the same direction. He whistled again; and again some one answered him. This time he knew it to be Kate's voice unmistakably, rising from some spot below him.

He shouted to her to keep her place, on no account to attempt to come to meet him. Then he dropped from ledge to ledge, and soon reached the shelf of rock where Kate was waiting.

She rose to her feet, and gazed through the mist incredulously.

"Is it *you*? How did you know? Oh, how good it was of you to come."

"Dear child, I was sure to come," he said simply.

She looked at him wonderingly still, half ashamed and half afraid.

"Will you forgive me?" she said; "I didn't mean it. I think I was made to speak as I did. Forgive me, and love me again—father!"

She flung her arms round his neck as he stood looking at her gently, and hid her face on his breast.

"You will not forgive me," she said with something like a sob; "you are angry. You will never forget."

"Dear child, I never was angry, not for a moment. You were not to blame." He loosed her arms from about his neck gently, and sat down. The emotion which he had kept in check before, overcame him now, though he gave little sign of it; it brought back that pain to his heart and that weakness to his limbs which he had felt more than once before.

He sat down slowly and carefully, like a man uncertain of his own strength; then, seeing a look of pain and perplexity on his daughter's face, he smiled at her, and drew her on his knee.

"I am tired, Kate. I will rest a little."

"You were not fit to come," she said with passionate repentance, as she kissed the hands that clasped hers: "you have been ill: and it is my fault that you have had to come. I am always, always wrong."

"No, dear, no. But you want some one to guide you. You must never do this again, even if I am not here to tell you."

"But you will keep me with you, will you not? You will never send me away again, or go away without me?"

"Not unless you wish it, Kate. I came home for your sake only."

"Do you know that I was coming to Oakdale to look for you? I couldn't bear to let another night go by without telling you that I was sorry, that I loved you, that it was all a sort of dreadful mistake. Will you ever, ever love me, and trust me again?"

"I never ceased to do it, dear child," he answered, stroking her hair caressingly; but all the time he was conscious of her danger and of his weakness. He must by some means get her up to the top of the cliff. He only waited till he felt strong enough to make the effort.

Kate had, on the other hand, almost forgotten where they were. She was following out her own thoughts, and trying to satisfy her own anxieties.

"You will never leave me," she repeated, "it was not because you wished it—that you left my mother?"

Henry Dilworth put his hand against his heart, and breathed more slowly and painfully.

"Child," he said, "you hurt me with your questions. Take on trust what you do not understand, and believe that I will never leave you while you love me—and want me."

She murmured some apology, vexed at her own selfish vehemence and preoccupation. He hardly seemed to hear her, but rose to his feet, and said quietly, "I am rested. We will go on now."

She clung to his arm, however, and answered, "I don't know if I can; I hurt my ankle in getting here."

"That's unfortunate. Others are looking for us; but they may not come down here. It's an awkward place you have got into. I must take you at least to the top of the cliff."

"Could you leave me and go to tell them?"

"I will never leave you till you are safe. Have I waited all these years to have my daughter for my own again, and shall I leave her here, in this place, after all?"

He laughed a little at the idea.

"Then we will wait here," said Kate; "I am not afraid now you have come."

"Nay," he said quickly, "I have used my strength recklessly enough all my life. Must I spare it for the first time, now, when it will be of some use to you? I can carry you very easily, but you must hold fast in the difficult places where I have to use my hands."

She obeyed him, having perfect confidence in his power and judgment. She had always heard of him, and thought of him, as an exceptionally strong man physically, and she had no idea how much his strength had failed him of late. He had been ill certainly, but that was from cold, she thought; he had recovered; and as he gave no sign of painful effort she was not aware that he was making any now, in his determination to save her. He made his way upwards very slowly and cautiously, taking advantage of every bit of rock or stone, planting one foot firmly before moving the other, and so passing safely over difficult places. As he went on, however, one arm clasping her, the other free to help him in climbing, he began to be more and more conscious of fatigue and faintness. A momentary giddiness kept him clinging to a rock longer than was necessary to make his footing sure; a trembling in his limbs warned him not to step on uncertain places where a slip would be dangerous; but he pressed on slowly and silently; for the top was not far off, although he was approaching it by a more oblique and, therefore, a longer route than the one by which he had descended. When he attained a spot where all the worst difficulties seemed to be over, he stopped suddenly, stooped that Kate might regain her footing, and relieve him of her weight, then he stood quite still, steadyng himself by a piece of jutting rock.

"I can go no farther," he said after a moment; "we must wait."

"You have done too much," she said remorsefully. "You have been ill so lately."

"I must rest, that is all. They will find us here—in time. We are not so far out of the way now, and it is quite safe above, only rather steep. If no one came you could make your way to the top on your hands and knees. But they will come. We have only got to wait."

He sat down and leaned back against the rock behind him; then he drew Kate on his knee again, and she nestled close to him with her head on his shoulder.

"It is cold for you, dear child," he said, as the penetrating mist drove past him, and his caressing hand felt the moisture clinging to her hair; "you are not used to such exposure."

"I am very well, I am very warm," she answered, "it is you who will suffer, I know. It shall never

be so again. You will let me take care of you afterwards; won't you? and make you happy and well?"

"You shall do what you like," he answered; but even now his thoughts were hardly with his words; he was pondering on the position, and wondering how to make it less injurious to her. He remembered the flask in his pocket, and, drawing it out, told her to drink half of its contents.

"It will revive you, and keep you warm," he said.

She obeyed without a word; and then he wrapped his cloak round her, and drew her closer into the warmth of his arms.

"How kind you are! how good you are!" she whispered. "What a pity to have been without you so long!"

He did not answer her; he was not inclined for speech; he still was absorbed by the consciousness of a danger, the oppression of a suffering, at which she did not guess.

She asked at length, as drowsiness overcame her, "Does it matter if I fall asleep?" And he answered, "Sleep, child, if you can; you are safe; and I will keep you warm."

Her long wandering and waiting had made her weary, so that now, in the warmth of his arms, wrapped about by his cloak, with all anxiety gone from her, she fell gradually into slumber. Even the shrill signal-whistle, which from time to time he uttered as a guide to those seeking them, did not arouse her.

The dog had failed to follow Henry Dilworth in his steep descent, and he hoped now that the animal had turned homewards, and might lead the other seekers here. But as the time passed on the chilliness increased. He put his hand on Kate's, and fancied that it was getting colder. He had already felt it to be a hard thing that the strength which had been his for so many years should fail him at the first moment when he needed it for his own child's help; now it was harder to imagine what the cost of this failure might be. The health which made her so beautiful and happy, which had shone in her eyes and glowed in her cheeks, might be lost, wasted, thrown away by one night's error on her part and weakness on his. The thought of it was intolerable to him. He was resolved to save her from injury at any cost. Gently lifting her head, he pushed the sleeve of his coat from the arm supporting her, and then slipped it off altogether, to wrap it round his daughter instead.

She moved a little, murmured, "What is it? Will they come soon?" and fell asleep again without waiting for any answer.

If it had been cold before, it was colder now to Henry Dilworth. The mist soaked through his shirt sleeves, and chilled his limbs to numbness. The oppression and difficulty of breathing from which he was suffering increased. Mechanically he felt in his pocket for the flask from which he had made Kate drink. It contained brandy-and-water, mixed with a few drops of opium. He had taken such a draught more than once as a remedy for certain painful symptoms. And he had never needed it so much as now, when the brandy would warm his limbs and stimulate his exhausted strength; the opium would soothe and relieve his suffering and depression. He took the cork from the flask, and raised it to his lips, but

before he had tasted it he remembered that Kate might awake cold and exhausted, and need the very draught he was taking.

If the mist remained on the mountain, and the seekers took other directions, many hours might still pass away before help came. Kate's strength would fail, and no care that he could take of her would be enough to keep from her limbs the deadly chill of that fatal mist. It was even possible that when morning came she might have to find her way from the mountain alone. In such a case the draught he held in his fingers was the one help he could insure to her, the one thing which might be left to revive and save her.

He put the cork in its place again carefully, felt for his daughter's hand, and laid the bottle in it.

"Kate, dear child," he said, speaking very distinctly, as if he wished to impress every word on her mind, "put this bottle in your pocket. It is brandy-and-water, what you had before. Drink the rest when you feel cold."

Her fingers closed drowsily over it. She felt for her pocket mechanically, and put the bottle in. When he repeated his words, and said—"Do you understand, Kate? Drink the rest when you feel cold," she answered dreamily, "Yes, I am to drink it when I feel cold;" but, wrapped in the warmth of a happy sleep, she did not raise her head to look round, or try to understand the reason of the instruction he had given to her. She was content to obey, and to leave the rest to him. She moved her head sleepily against his shoulder, felt for his hand, and clasped it. Its coldness did not arouse her; nor, dreaming happily of a life in the future with him, did she notice that from that moment his signal-whistle was never repeated.

She woke when the mists were thinning and the dawn was breaking. A vague sense of terror and distress was upon her; the cold had penetrated to her limbs, and a nightmare dream had succeeded the happy slumber of the hours before. There was the sound of a barking dog near her, voices, and footsteps.

Forgetting where she was, and still in the perplexity of sleep, she sprang to her feet in answer to Jack's cry of "Kate!"

"Oh! Jack, you have come at last! How long I have waited!"

The pain in her ankle recalled her to a distincter memory of the circumstances around her. She leaned against the rock, and turned towards her father.

"He found me," she said; "he carried me here. Father!—" She stopped suddenly, with a startled look, and eyes that dilated in a great terror.

"Why doesn't he speak? Why doesn't he look? Is he asleep? Oh! Jack, it cannot be that he is ill!"

One of the men had gone forward to the place where Henry Dilworth still sat, his back against the wall of rock, his head a little forward with the chin resting against his chest. The guide lifted one motionless arm, and let it fall again. Then he glanced at Kate, made an apologetic gesture to Jack, as if an unpleasant duty had been put upon him, and said distinctly enough, but in a low voice—

"It's all over. We can do nothing here."

And Kate, flinging herself on her knees beside him, looked into her father's face, and knew that her love had been given too late.

(To be continued.)

IDLE THOUGHTS.

BY AN IDLE FELLOW.

ON THE WEATHER.

THINGS do go so contrary like with me. I wanted to hit upon an especially novel, out-of-the-way subject for this week. "I will write about something altogether new, next time," I said to myself; "something that nobody else has ever written or talked about before; and then I can have it all my own way." And I went about for days, trying to think of something of this kind; and I couldn't. And Mrs. Cutting, our charwoman, came yesterday—I don't mind mentioning her name, because I know she will not see this article. She would not look at a magazine. She never reads anything but the Bible and *Lloyd's Weekly News*. All other literature she considers frivolous and sinful.

She said: "Lor, sir, you do look worried."

I said: "Mrs. Cutting, I am trying to think of a subject, the discussion of which will come upon the world in the nature of a startler—some subject upon which no previous human being has ever said a word—some subject that will attract by its novelty, invigorate by its surprising freshness."

She laughed, and said I was a funny gentleman.

That's my luck again. When I make serious observations, people chuckle; when I attempt a joke, nobody sees it. I had a beautiful one last week. I thought it so good, and I worked it up, and brought it in artfully at a dinner-party. I forgot how exactly, but we had been talking about the attitude of Shakespeare towards the Reformation, and I said something, and immediately added, "Ah, that reminds me; such a funny thing happened the other day in White-chapel." "Oh," said they; "what was that?" "Oh, t'was awfully funny," I replied, beginning to giggle myself; "it will make you roar;" and I told it them.

There was dead silence when I finished—it was one of those long jokes, too—and then, at last, somebody said: "And that was the joke?"

I assured them that it was, and they were very polite, and took my word for it. All but one old gentleman, at the other end of the table, who wanted to know which was the joke—what he said to her, or what she said to him; and we argued it out.

Some people are too much the other way. I knew a fellow once, whose natural tendency to laugh at everything was so strong, that, if you wanted to talk seriously to him, you had to explain beforehand that what you were going to say would not be amusing. Unless you got him to clearly understand this, he would go off into fits of merriment over every word you uttered. I have known him, on being asked the time, stop short in the middle of the road, slap his leg, and burst into a roar of laughter. One never dared say anything really funny to that man. An actual joke would have killed him on the spot.

In the present instance, I vehemently repudiated the accusation of frivolity, and pressed Mrs. Cutting for practical ideas. She then became serious, and hazarded "samplers;" saying that she never heard them spoken much of now, but that they used to be all the rage when she was a girl.

I declined samplers, and begged her to think again. She pondered a long while, with the tray in her hands, and at last suggested the weather, which she was sure had been most trying of late.

And ever since that idiotic suggestion, I have been unable to get the weather out of my thoughts, or anything else in.

It certainly is most wretched weather. (At all events, it is so now, at the time I am writing, and, if it isn't particularly unpleasant when this paper comes to be read, it soon will be; so it's all the same.) Our next door neighbour comes out in the back garden every now and then, and says it's doing the country a world of good—not his coming out into the back garden, but the weather. He doesn't understand a bit about it, but ever since he started a cucumber frame last autumn, he has regarded himself in the light of an agriculturist, and talks in this absurd way with the idea of impressing the rest of the terrace with the notion that he is a retired farmer. I can only hope that, for this once, he is correct, and that the weather really is doing good to something, because it is doing me a considerable amount of damage. It is spoiling both my clothes and my temper. The latter I can afford, as I have a good supply of it, but it wounds me to the quick to see my dear old hats and trousers sinking, prematurely worn and aged, beneath the cold world's blasts and snows.

There is my new spring suit too. A beautiful suit it was, and now it is hanging up so bespattered with mud, I can't bear to look at it.

That was Jim's fault, that was. I should never have gone out in it that night, if it had not been for him. I was just trying it on when he came in. He threw up his arms with a wild yell, the moment he caught sight of it, and exclaimed that he had "got 'em again!"

I said: "Does it fit all right behind?"

"Spifin' old man," he replied. And then he wanted to know if I was coming out.

I said "no," at first, but he overruled me. He said that a man with a suit like that had no right to stop indoors. "Every citizen," said he, "owes a duty to the public. Each one should contribute to the general happiness, as far as lies in his power. Come out, and give the girls a treat."

Jim is slangy. I don't know where he picks it up. It certainly is not from me.

I said: "Do you think it will really please 'em?"

He said it would be like a day in the country to them.

That decided me. It was a lovely evening, and I went.

When I got home, I undressed and rubbed myself down with whisky, put my feet in hot water, and a mustard plaster on my chest, had a basin of gruel and a glass of hot brandy and water, tallowed my nose, and went to bed.

These prompt and vigorous measures, aided by a naturally strong constitution, were the means of preserving my life; but as for the suit! Well, there, it isn't a suit; its a splash board.

And I did fancy that suit, too. But that's just the way. I never do get particularly fond of anything in this world, but what something dreadful happens to it. I had a tame rat when I was a boy,

and I loved that animal as only a boy would love an old water rat; and, one day, it fell into a large dish of gooseberry-fool that was standing to cool in the kitchen, and nobody knew what had become of the poor creature, until the second helping.

I do hate wet weather. At least, it is not so much the wet, as the mud, that I object to. Somehow or other, I seem to possess an irresistible alluring power over mud. I have only to show myself in the street on a muddy day to be half smothered by it. It all comes of being so attractive, as the old lady said when she was struck by lightning. Other people can go out on dirty days, and walk about for hours without getting a speck upon themselves; while, if I go across the road, I come back a perfect disgrace to be seen (as, in my boyish days, my poor dear mother, used often to tell me). If there were only one dab of mud to be found in the whole of London, I am convinced I should carry it off from all competitors.

I wish I could return the affection, but I fear I never shall be able to. I have a horror of what they call the "London particular." I feel miserable and muggy all through a dirty day, and it is quite a relief to pull one's clothes off and get into bed, out of the way of it all. Everything goes wrong in wet weather. I don't know how it is, but there always seem to me to be more people, and dogs, and perambulators, and cabs, and carts, about in wet weather, than at any other time, and they all get in your way more, and everybody is so disagreeable—except myself—and it does make me so wild. And then, too, somehow, I always find myself carrying more things in wet weather than in dry; and, when you have a bag, and three parcels, and a newspaper; and it suddenly comes on to rain, you can't open your umbrella.

Which reminds me of another phase of the weather that I can't bear, and that is April weather (so-called, because it always comes in May). Poets think it very nice. As it does not know its own mind five minutes together, they liken it to a woman; and it is supposed to be very charming on that account. I don't appreciate it myself. Such lightning change business may be all very agreeable in a girl. It is no doubt highly delightful to have to do with a person who grins one moment about nothing at all, and snivels the next for precisely the same cause, and who then giggles, and then sulks, and who is rude, and affectionate, and bad-tempered, and jolly, and boisterous, and silent, and passionate, and cold, and stand-offish, and flopping, all in one minute (mind I don't say this. It is those poets. And they are supposed to be connoisseurs of this sort of thing); but in the weather, the disadvantages of the system are more apparent. A woman's tears do not make one wet, but the rain does; and her coldness does not lay the foundations of asthma and rheumatism, as the east wind is apt to. I can prepare for, and put up with a regularly bad day, but these ha'porth of all sorts kind of days do not suit me. It aggravates me to see a bright blue sky above me, when I am walking along wet through; and there is something so exasperating about the way the sun comes out, smiling, after a drenching shower, and seems to say: "Lord love you, you don't mean to say you're wet. Well, I am surprised. Why it was only my fun."

They don't give you time to open or shut your umbrella in an English April, especially if it is

an "automaton" one—the umbrella I mean, not the April.

I bought an "automaton" once in April, and I did have a time with it! I wanted an umbrella, and I went into a shop in the Strand, and told them so, and they said—

"Yessir; what sort of an umbrella would you like?"

I said I should like one that would keep the rain off, and that would not allow itself to be left behind in a railway carriage.

"Try an 'automaton,'" said the shopman.

"What's an 'automaton'?" said I.

"Oh, it's a beautiful arrangement," replied the man, with a touch of enthusiasm. "It opens and shuts itself."

I bought one, and found that he was quite correct. It did open and shut itself. I had no control over it whatever. When it began to rain, which it did, that season, every alternate five minutes, I used to try and get the machine to open, but it would not budge; and then I used to stand and struggle with the wretched thing, and shake it, and swear at it, while the rain poured down in torrents. Then the moment the rain ceased, the absurd thing would go up suddenly with a jerk, and would not come down again; and I had to walk about under a bright blue sky, with an open umbrella over my head, wishing that it would come on to rain again, so that it might not seem that I was insane.

When it did shut, it did so unexpectedly, and knocked one's hat off.

I don't know why it should be so, but it is an undeniable fact that there is nothing makes a man look so supremely ridiculous as losing his hat. The feeling of helpless misery that shoots down one's back on suddenly becoming aware that one's head is bare is among the most bitter ills that flesh is heir to. And then there is the wild chase after it, accompanied by an excitable small dog, who thinks it is a game, and in the course of which you are certain to upset three or four innocent children—to say nothing of their mothers—butt a fat old gentleman on to the top of a perambulator, and cannon off a ladies' seminary into the arms of a wet sweep. After this, the idiotic hilarity of the spectators, and the disreputable appearance of the hat, when recovered, appear but of minor importance.

Altogether, what between March winds, April showers, and the entire absence of May flowers, spring is not a success in cities. It is all very well in the country, but in towns whose population is anything over ten thousand it most certainly ought to be abolished. In the world's grim workshops, it is like the children—out of place. Neither show to advantage amidst the dust and din. It seems so sad to see the little dirt-grimed brats, trying to play in the noisy courts and muddy streets. Poor little uncared-for, unwanted human atoms, they are not children. Children are bright-eyed, chubby, and shy. These are dingy, screeching elves, their tiny faces seared and withered, their baby laughter cracked and hoarse.

The spring of life, and the spring of the year were alike meant to be cradled in the green lap of Nature. To us, in the town, Spring brings but its cold winds, and drizzling rains. We must seek it amongst the leafless woods, and the brambly lanes, on the heathy moors, and the great, still

hills, if we want to feel its joyous breath, and hear its silent voices. There is a glorious freshness in the spring there. The scurrying clouds, the open bleakness, the rushing wind, and the clear, bright air, thrill one with vague energies and hopes. Life, like the landscape around us, seems bigger, and wider, and freer—a rainbow road, leading to unknown ends. Through the silvery rents that bar the sky, we seem to catch a glimpse of the great hope and grandeur that lies around this little throbbing world, and a breath of its scent is wafted us on the wings of the wild March wind.

Strange thoughts we do not understand are stirring in our hearts. Voices are calling us to some great effort, to some mighty work. But we do not comprehend their meaning yet, and the hidden echoes within us that would reply are struggling, inarticulate and dumb.

We stretch our hands like children to the light, seeking to grasp we know not what. Our thoughts, like the boys' thoughts in the Danish song, are very long, long thoughts, and very vague, we cannot see their end.

It must be so. All thoughts that peer outside this narrow world cannot be else than dim and shapeless. The thoughts that we can clearly grasp are very little thoughts—that two and two make four—that when we are hungry it is pleasant to eat and that honesty is the best policy; all greater thoughts are undefined and vast to our poor childish brains. We see but dimly through the mists that roll around our time-girt isle of life, and only hear the distant surging of the great sea beyond.

JEROME K. JEROME.

TIME.

TIME'S sweeping waves roll on: age follows age,
And, in the vast expanse of stormy years,
Steering as best he may where safety lies,
Sailing as best he may with wind and tide,
Man journeys daily nearer to the end.
Then comes to each in turn that one great wave
Which ends his voyage, blots out sun and storm,
And, 'midst the vessels of his fellow men,
Leaves but a blank which others sail upon
'Ere yet the sinking bark is out of sight.
So where his memory drowns and is forgot
One passing ripple marks his grave in Time,
Until the circles, widening dimly out,
Are lost in other circles like themselves.
Does then the tide of Time roll on so fast?
Question the wonders of our little world,
The crumbling relics of a bygone age;
The stony mountains reared by human hands
To hold the dust of Egypt's dynasty;
The fallen glories of majestic Thebes,
And all the noble things and deeds and thoughts
Of men whose very languages are dead.
Seek then in Nature's own great throbbing heart;
Niagara thundering with ceaseless roar
Its Maker's praise; the palm-crowned coral reef
Shooting with living rock from Ocean's depths;
The glacier in its vast and tardy march,
Extending inch on inch and moving miles—
Ask these and ask the waves which cover lands

Where once things living walked and saw and breathed;
 The purple hills, whose age is household word
 And which lay once beneath the shifting sea.
 If these speak not in solemn harmony
 Of early beacons o'er the waves of Time,
 Spurn our young earth with wingèd foot and seek
 From all infinity for signs of age.
 The burning sun and desolate silver moon,
 The comet—mighty flying messenger
 From solitudes unfathomed, spheres unknown,
 These, with the countless starry hosts of night,
 Sing, as they cleave their lonely way through
 space;
 Sing, in eternal unison, the hymn of Time.
 Is Time so long then, are the years so long?
 Ask Life in all its endless earthly forms;
 Ask those who live their last few hours of life;
 Those'midst the blood and smoke and steel of war;
 The trembling felon walking to his end;
 And all who struggle through the final scene—
 Then will they answer "No." Ask the pale flower
 Whioh blossoms in a night and dies at dawn;
 Ask everything created wherein rests
 The Spirit Life. Then She with outstretched hand
 Will point towards one ever-present form
 And answer, in the shadow of black Death,
 "Time is too short, Time is too short for Life,"
 All life must ever answer Time is short,
 Time Past belongs to things and ages past;
 Time Future is a promised gift to all,
 To some a wealth of untold, shining gold,
 To some a heritage of bitter woe,
 To some a mine of hopeful promises,
 To some a barren waste of storm-swept wild;
 Time Present—Is there such a time as that?
 The present—like a wreath of curling smoke
 Which has no form nor substance—is the past
 Ere we can say it is.
 So the brief moments which establish Time
 Are in the boundless Future or the Past,
 Except one present second and that one
 Is to all Time that has been and shall be,
 As Time shall be to all Eternity.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

LONG-SHORING IN KENT.

BY W. SIME.

DEAL.

B EACHES have as much individuality as streets, and one beach differs from another as much as the Strand does from Piccadilly, or Fleet Street from Paternoster Row. It is not respectable to like beaches either in or out of season. No one who has a moral character to lose should ever be seen on the verge of the sea, unless he be gingerly toeing the shingle with his bare feet, and going down into the deep in his own skin to bathe. To like a beach for its own sake, and with one's clothes on, is to be quite too eccentric. What can you be doing there? You must be a smuggler, or an intending suicide, or running dynamite—at least you are not in your carriage or cab exchanging tosses of the head and scornful glances with the occupants of other curries on the esplanades, thoughtfully constructed for those who respect themselves. You are poor, you have low tastes, you are up to some little game, or you wouldn't be there. Yet, after all, if one goes to

the seaside it is the beach he goes for—not the curries and tossing of heads, which may be enjoyed anywhere else to much better advantage. Beaches vary according to the time of year. In the height of the season—its own season, which has nothing to do with the esplanade's—the industries of a beach are as good as a fancy fair. Take Brighton beach at the height of its season. Seat yourself anywhere, regardless of anybody, and throw small stones at the waves. What a busy place it is! Here comes the old lady with the basket of lace—hand-made she says, and it is at least worth a penny to hear the argument of ineffectual barter before she passes on. Throw more stones, and by comes the old lady with the basket of oranges and nuts—ginger and otherwise. Oh, just to be six years of age, with twopence, and the power to dip an arm among these nuts! And the gentlemen with the banjos and the claw-hammers, and the twang in their voices, and the blacked faces! Their music is not of the spheres—unless it be three balls—but it is jocund and harmless enough. Then the man with the performing poodles, who have more brains than he has—the poor poodles who make a dash at the water and bark, when the coppers have been handed over for their cleverness. Not to speak of the lad who sells sea-stories at a penny a piece, with the name of Dickens emblazoned on the page, which, when purchased, you find have only been dedicated to him by the local artist who has created them; nor of the boy who wants you to take a seat and pay a penny for it, and who indulges in profane personalities as to your hat and breeches, when he sees no inclination to move; nor of the well-fed tar, who with "a far-away look," as the young ladies say of their heroes in the stories, suggests, once, twice, thrice a sail into the deep; nor of the shrimpers who shrimp, the loafers who loaf, the children who rush and scream and tumble, and scoop and defy the sea, and get their stockings wet, and go home to trouble with their nurses. All that is very good fun in the beach's season; but take one out of the season, in early spring, as I took Deal, and even then there is something to be got out of it. Deal, when there is nobody in it but its own proper inhabitants, can hardly be accused of excessive liveliness—from the long-shoring point of view I mean. My window looked into the moat of the castle of Henry VIII. In midsummer this moat is said to be overhung with ivy of a luscious green. Beyond the drawbridge figs are said to come to fruition, and soldiers are reported to be seen red on the ramparts. In early spring it is not too exhilarating to look into it. Not even a rat runs round it to exhibit a sign of life. The castle is inhabited, but preserves an outcast look of uninhabitation, like any old structure on the shore, and castles abound. It is not nice to read of persons who visit castles writing about them afterwards, and I should certainly not rush into the pages of HOME CHIMES with such gratuitous and snobbish information. Still, being at Deal, I may say that the present resident of Sandown Castle, the hereditary gentleman who lives in it, insisted on my staying in it for a little. His own apartments are very near the sea; indeed, right on the beach, and the sea throws up a tremendous quantity of pebbles every year, so that the structure, which annually crumbles, promises to disappear with some high tide. Perhaps, the occupant may be a

little eccentric, for when I was with him he wore a sou'-wester most of the time, and moved about his apartments with a nautical swing. He asked me whether I had seen Walmer Castle on the other side of the town. I said, No, not as yet, but I hoped to have a look at it. Would he give me an introduction to the Lord-warden? I don't want to speak harshly of the residential occupant of Sandown Castle, but his expression then became scornful. "No," he said, "I cannot. He is no statesman. He deals with the Army and Navy Stores, and is very unpopular." The walk between Sandown Castle and the moat of Henry VIII.'s sunken edifice should be dear to the heart of every long-shore man. It shows all the varieties a long-shore man cares to have. Here, for example, is a great wind-mill circling to the breeze and Ixion's dusty head looking out of a lower window. Then a strip of pebbly walk from Sandown till there comes the beginnings of the town on that side, and one long street composed, on the seaward side, of the neat fleet of life-boats and pilot-boats ready to launch, on the land side of a variety of houses varying from plain wood to substantial stone when the esplanade is reached. That walk can be taken in half an hour. To Walmer the shore can be done in the same time, with an opener beach, though it is still an arrangement of houses on one side and boats ready for the sea on the other. The benefits of long-shoring in spring depend, it must be confessed, a good deal on the satisfaction one gets out of the sea as an object of contemplation, and as a high-toned restorer of health. For some days there were few variations to the outlook on the Goodwin Sands. On the esplanade an old man appears in a bath-chair wheeled by another old man, who looks to me to be the real invalid. The old man inside is salmon-coloured in the face, has a wicked activity of the eyes, a kind of what-the-deuce-is-your-business-here? look; the old man shoving is grey in the face, pants, looks hard put to it, and seems to wish he had 'arf the other one's complaint.

A more original figure is a gentleman with a spyglass. Wet or dry, he comes to a hoarding and puts out an old-fashioned spyglass, and spies the horizon. I take him to be a midshipman of fifty who has settled down on half-pay and likes to keep himself in touch with his profession. He is at least as precise as if he were on a quarter-deck; comes to his hoarding within two minutes of the time, braces himself up with a hitch, lurches his right foot towards the sea, turns, with his right eye on a cloud, sniffs, thrusts his glass beneath his elbow, and disappears. The looks of contempt exchanged by a Lloyd's man and the midshipman of fifty when they met one morning are too delicious for description.

On the beach, however, a small boy contributes some information about sea-gulls. The gulls of Deal are very presentable animals. They are not so broad in the wing or so immaculate in the purity of their feathers as gulls on more northern coasts. But they are at least not the muddy rascals which feed in the ooze of South-end, and carry their feeding into their colour. They are, on the whole, tolerably pure and fresh.

The small boy on the beach is intently watching a board to which short lines, baited with sprats, are attached.

"What are you fishing for?"

"Gulls."

"Do you ever catch any?"

"No."

"What do you it for, then?"

"I know a boy who once caught one."

"That's encouraging. And what did he do with him after he got him?"

"He put him in pickle and ate him. His father was poor."

It sounds like being chaffed, but the boy is quite in earnest.

"Has there only been one gull caught on the shore of Deal?"

I ask the question ruefully, because behind my bedroom window there was a wicker house with one bird it. The bird is a gull, and makes the most hideous succession of human screams from early morning till it is time to rise. At first I thought it was the midshipman murdering his wife somewhere in the neighbourhood, and cautiously looked from behind a curtain, intending afterwards to ring the bell and ask the servant to ask somebody else to see that he didn't do it. Then, in the early hours, a great white gull, flapping inside the wicker house, appeared himself the author of the murderous cries: so that I knew there were two gulls at least in Deal.

Later on in the same day I saw another small boy, and heard a gull screaming. Looking over a low wall, there was the same phenomenon—a gull in a wicker house.

"What bird is that, boy?"

"A gull."

"What do they keep him for?"

"He eats the guts o' the fish, sir, and keeps the back yard clean."

That was a second use to which the gull seems to be put in Deal. It suddenly occurred to me that he might be put to a third, and I asked the boy if he felt inclined to take threepence to go over the wall, and let the gull out. He said he would, and, indeed, did promptly and without a moment's hesitation. And what did the gull do? He came to his door, looked out, flapped his wings—which were full-grown—and flew down into the yard. Then a severe head appearing at a small window, the gull, with full power to escape and to get back to its native sea, flapped back again into its cage. The severe head making its appearance at a back door, on the top of a huge body, the boy and I both bolted. "That's my father," said he; and it was an exciting incident as long as it lasted. But it seemed, notwithstanding this mean-spirited gull, that the habit of keeping them under restraint is meaner yet. If I were a gull, I should prefer to be pickled, and kept as panper stock.

The chief advantage of Deal in long-shoring is that, when the wind blows from a certain quarter, the Downs, which the night before may have been without a ship, next morning reveals a surface of water studded with masts and hulls. That is always a fine sight, though it is well to have a little human sympathy for the men outside chafing at their chains.

I counted over a hundred ships of various sorts at anchor after such a wind, and then is the time to make use of the unused pier. Boats are constantly coming in and going away, and, as all nationalities are represented, it is a pleasure to

look on the varieties. When the Downs are full, more retired midshipmen with spy-glasses come down; another bath-chair with a healthy old man pushed by an invalid makes its appearance; an officer off his head perambulates and wrings his hands; two young ladies and a curate come, and a pair of detectives. It is remarkable to watch how rapidly a boat's crew from the Downs can get itself intoxicated. The boat comes ashore and the men are left in charge; presently the youngest member of the party disappears, and comes back with, apparently, nothing. Then, in half an hour, they are playing at leap-frog, and a few minutes later the more sober ones are handing the more collapsed ones into the bottom of the boat, in hopes that before their captain comes back they will be fit for an oar again. The coasters seem the best behaved, perhaps for a sufficient reason. A sailor off a Poole schooner was very sober, and explained that he got ten shillings a month and his keep. He said the last time he was in the Downs they lay for two months.

"What do you do most of the time?"

"Sleep," was the answer.

Now is the time to see the calibre of the Deal fishermen, when the wind is high and sprats are in the bay. The transformation from loafer to fisherman or pilot is a pretty thing to look at. The young men who yesterday were wiping their mouths at bar-room doors are now guiding their boats as if they were high-mettled horses. The loafer has become worker, and the change of attitude and expression is, indeed, pleasant to look on. I go down every day and have an hour of it with the curate, the bath-chair, the young ladies, the detectives, and the officer off his head.

THE MILL FARM.

BY MRS. GREGG.

IT was a summer night just when the days were at the longest, and in the lives of country folk there had come the short period when, if ever, in the agricultural work of the year, there is a pause.

The hay harvest was carried, and the grain had not begun to ripen.

There was no rustle in the milky green ears of the wheat, and the pale soft awns of the barley bent before the light summer breeze like the undulating sweep of silken robes.

In front of an old Devonshire farm-house a young girl was standing in a listening attitude, just in front of the porch, where heavy wreaths and tendrils of honeysuckle crossed and recrossed each other as they lay heavily on the rounded top, and reached down and waved along its sides, and mixed themselves up with the early roses that were blooming there.

In a flower-border lying near the house, night-scented stocks were breathing out their rich, warm perfume, and mingling with the fragrance all around.

Through the deepening twilight the girl gazed on down where the roadway between the trees was becoming dark.

The white spikes on a great chestnut-tree near were growing dim, and the stars that looked so

pale a little while before were showing something of their own true brightness in the dimness around.

"What keeps him!" said the girl, in vexation, to herself. "Father will certainly be here before him now!"

The man whom she called this was but her step-father, and her mother, a helpless invalid, lay upstairs listening as well. Not for a lover's hasty step, fearing to lose one minute of the short interview plucked from the very brink of danger, but for the heavy tread of the old mare her husband had for so many years driven to market, and the well-known sound the broad wheels of his gig made made on the gravel below.

She was always relieved when on market nights she knew he had come safely home.

They were not many miles from Plymouth, but the cross-road to their farm was lonely, and so narrow that the wild old hawthorn hedges nearly met overhead, making the lane—for it was no more—so dark at night that nothing coming towards you could be seen until the horses' noses met, and then the difficulty was to get past, and many a story of mishaps was told—of wheels that locked, or that got up so high upon the bank, the vehicle they belonged to nearly toppled over; and though these things were rare, still they had happened and might again.

Farmer Butterworth had been in town selling fat lambs, and his man, who was already for some time at home, said his master told him he would be ready to leave soon after he did; so Cicely, watching for George Stanford, did not know the moment her step-father would appear instead.

It would not do for the two men to meet—not there at least—for Mr. Butterworth had made short work with his clerk, George Stanford, when it came to his knowledge that he was courting Cicely Ashton. That he had a clerk, came from the circumstance of his owning flour-mills which did a good business, and were, indeed, a greater source of income than even his extensive and well-managed farm.

But as no one man, even if very much younger and more active than he was now, could keep up with the two occupations, a managing clerk was needed at the mills, and for several years young Stanford had filled this place with satisfaction to his employer, until the knowledge came to him that he and Cicely were in the habit of walking and talking together, and otherwise comporting themselves after the fashion of lovers.

He taxed George Stanford with this being so, and was answered in the affirmative, whereupon he grew angry, and spoke as he ought not to have done; for Stanford was without reproach, save for this matter of falling in love, and as for being a poor young fellow with only a paltry salary to live upon, why Cicely had but herself to bestow upon any man—a very fair and loveable self, indeed, but still that was all.

Her father when living held some small command in the Coastguard service as then constituted, and the Government pension that his widow had was forfeited by her second marriage; so that she and little Cicely came to the Mill Farm dowerless—a consideration of little value to Mr. Butterworth, who had a very substantial share of this world's goods.

There was no second family, and Cicely was looked upon in the neighbourhood quite as an heiress, for people said, who else could the rich old man leave his money to? He had no relations whom any one ever heard of.

Still this, like the predictions in general that are hazarded about other people's affairs, was just as likely not to be, and was tolerably certain not to be, if Cicely displeased her step-father.

He had always been kind to her, but very arbitrary, and about George Stanford he spoke in such a manner that but for her sick mother's sake Cicely would probably have done something rash, and left her step-father's house, sooner than listen to such words again; for she had no idea of giving up her lover. They were determined to hold to each other.

George had no ignoble desire to secure old Butterworth's wealth through Cicely, and only that she could not leave her mother, she would have braved everything, married George upon nothing, and gone with him to America, where he was now about to seek his fortune.

This night that we see her in the twilight, watching and listening, was for his farewell visit. His passage for New York was taken, and tomorrow he was to go on board the packet.

Unless he came soon now, how few the last hurried words must be!

And as she thought so he was at her side, coming round quickly past a clump of laurels.

They drew back into the shade of the densely covered porch, and a few—a very few—minutes had passed, when—crunch, crunch—there were heavy steps on the gravel, and round the corner of the house came Mr. Butterworth.

He had driven into the farm-yard by the back-way, but why he had not entered the house from the same direction as was his custom when coming in from the yard—why he had come on round to the front door instead—probably he could not have told.

Such things surely arise from some innate perversity in human affairs, impelling people exactly where they are not wanted, and where they ought not to go.

Whether Mr. Butterworth was coming in at his own front door, or passing by that way on some other errand, perhaps, as he often did, to take a good-night glance at the colts in their paddock hard by—this, for a moment, the lovers did not know.

Instinctively they retreated; the hall behind was almost dark; it ran back some little way, ending on the left in a staircase, and on the right in a passage leading to the kitchen, beyond which was the yard.

"Back, back!" whispered Cicely; "go back," and she stepped before her lover.

Stanford was by no means a tall man, and he was also very slight. He had the straight features and dark hair and eyes of a Cornishman, but his build was light and wiry.

Cicely was a large, fair girl, tall, with a well-developed figure, and a quiet, half-state manner, such as is seen in higher circles oftener than in the yeoman class, where Cicely Ashton had her place. With her it was probably the natural outcome of a resolute and enduring will.

Drawing herself up to her full height, she stood tying the ribbon-strings of her black silk

apron in an elaborate bow, as an excuse for the slight extension of her arms that added just a little to the screen her figure was interposing between her lover and her step-father, who had turned in at the door.

"You are late, sir," she said, addressing him in the deferential manner customary from young people some years ago. "Supper is on the table. Shall I draw the ale?"

"Better get some light first," he said; and he hung up his hat and whip on the hall stand.

The door of the oak parlour, where supper was on the table, lay wide open, and Cicely stood at it, as if waiting for him to go in, and upon whether he did this everything depended.

If he went upstairs, he must see Stanford; if he went down the passage, he would stumble against him.

For one breathless moment he stood still, rubbing his head and face with a large Bandana handkerchief; then, as was his custom always when going to bed, but scarcely ever until then, he deliberately locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and turned into the oak parlour, telling Cicely to "get lights now, and the ale."

Even as she answered him a flash of the quick woman's wit, that has devised so many a sudden escape, came to the girl.

Down the dark passage behind, just where a turn in the staircase gave greater width, stood a large old clock, belonging to the days when structures such as it were found in all well-to-do country houses, and when the size of their ponderous cases was a theme of admiration. Among such, the clock at the Mill Farm surely held high place, and this not alone for size, but for its striking qualities as well.

For beyond the ordinary reach of a clock's power it sounded loud and deep, and for this, since Mrs. Butterworth had been so ill, it had not been wound up. In that old house with the partitions all of wood, people needed to sleep the sleep of a labouring man not to be wakened by it, and Mrs. Butterworth, who slept but little, and that with difficulty, would have been wakened by a cricket.

It must have been Cicely's own past experience that suggested the clock to her as a place of refuge for her lover. When she was a little girl she had often been in it, had hidden there sometimes. The key was in the door, itself like a wicket gate, and the manoeuvre was so rapidly executed, that Stanford hardly knew what Cicely was doing, until he was inside, and she had the door locked, having just time to whisper—

"I'll be back as soon as he is asleep."

The personal pronoun of course applied to Mr. Butterworth.

There was literally nothing else that could be safely done, as he, little knowing whom he was shutting in, had locked the front door, and the farm servants being at supper in the kitchen, Stanford, well-known to them all, and the cause of his leaving the Mill Farm known equally well, could not go out that way.

Mr. Butterworth seemed tired and worn out; something in the market had annoyed him that day, and directly supper was over he told Cicely to go and see about her mother; he wanted to go to bed. Mrs. Butterworth, one of whose troubles

was loss of sleep, lay bedridden in a room the door of which opened into her husband's, and always before he came up, Cicely arranged things for her, leaving her jelly and lemonade on a table close by, and placing the light in the night-shade.

As she lingered lest anything more might be wanted, she heard her step-father's voice in the passage just close by the clock, telling the servants in the kitchen to shut up the house, and then the tramp of the farm men going out to their sleeping places in the yard.

A succession of short, low barks told that the mastiff was unchained, and as she descended the stairs she saw Mr. Butterworth seated in the hall taking off his heavy boots; a maid brought him slippers, and with them the keys from the back of the house. Once he was upstairs a large part of Cicely's anxiety would be over, for she could not forget what might happen if George were only to cough!

Nearly two hours afterwards, with the light darkness of a summer night all around, she stole softly from her room and along the passage leading to Mr. Butterworth's door.

Her crisp rustling cambric dress was exchanged for one of a soft, dark woollen stuff, while part of her face and her bright, fair hair were covered with a dark hood.

Cautiously turning the door handle and opening it just wide enough to place her ear at, she listened; the heavy breathing within gave her courage, and she went softly forward.

Her gaol was a small table at the bedside, on which, according to Mr. Butterworth's invariable custom, lay the house keys.

With a few stealthy steps she approached; when creak, creak, went a treacherous board that she knew of perfectly, but thought she was avoiding, and then occurred the very thing she most dreaded, a fretful call from her mother to know who was there!

Cicely with her hand at the moment on the great key nearly knocked it off the table.

"Who's there? What's the matter?" asked the feeble voice, and in a very agony of fear Cicely glided back, holding hard by the key, and drawing the door after her without waiting to fasten it, she fled away down the stairs.

Had Mr. Butterworth been in pursuit, he could scarcely have overtaken her before she had released her lover.

But he was not, the fatigue of the fair where he had been till so late, and the oppression of a warm night, made him a match for the Seven Sleepers.

Quickly letting her lover out of the clock, with all possible precaution, they unlocked the front door and passed out into the cool night air, with a gentle dew falling and soft star-light overhead.

Then one brief interval of love and sorrow, of passion and parting, and Stanford was gone—away down the pathway through the trees, lost to sight in a minute, and with streaming eyes and ready to bear any amount of reproaches from her step-father, Cicely returned to the house, fastened the door, crept up the stairs, and restored the key to its place, this time, noting the position of the creaking board by the faint bars of light that came through the open door of her mother's room.

Along the several miles of road that lay between the Mill Farm and Plymouth her lover hurried, while Cicely lay on her bed and cried, because she could not go with him and share—she thought she could have lightened—the hardship and poverty that might lie before him.

That afternoon the *Zenobia*, with Stanford and many another fortune-seeker on board, rounded the Breakwater and stood out to sea.

More than two years had passed from the time that has been told of, when on a dull November afternoon, a cab with a lady inside it and many packages and boxes packed on the top, might have been seen passing through the old part of the town of Plymouth, and stopping before a low stone archway, where an iron gate barred further progress.

A ponderous knocker in the form of a black lion was fastened to the gate, and the driver getting down laid hold of it and struck a clangor double knock that wakened echoes all around.

A little girl in a quaint costume appeared, unlocked the heavy gate, and the cab passed through into a courtyard, surrounded by two storied buildings of dark red brick, having tiled roofs of the same colour and many small-paned, latticed windows.

An oppressive, airless-looking place on a winter afternoon when the murky air was laden with thick drizzling rain, and the sky seemed sheeted with lead, but a safe and good home for the many generations of helpless ones who had been nourished and sheltered there.

When "Werburgh's Charity" was founded these buildings were in the fields, and the iron clad fleet that lies in Plymouth Bay was prefigured by the small sailing ships of Drake and Frobisher.

The lady in the cab, dressed in mourning, was our old friend Cicely Ashton, the newly appointed mistress of "Werburgh's Female School," and the door in the line of brick buildings that they stopped at was that of her residence.

It opened into a small hall with a kitchen and parlour on either side, upstairs there were two rooms.

A bright fire was burning in the kitchen, and various heavy old pieces of furniture, fixtures in the place, gave it something of a homely air.

The little girl in the mob cap, serge frock, and white tippet and apron, stood smiling and waiting for orders, and the cabman brought in the boxes.

That Cicely should be coming to Werburgh's as a teacher, augured changes at the Mill Farm. These there have been and not for the better.

Mrs. Butterworth died soon after the time when we heard of her, and Cicely lived on with her step-father.

George Stanford's name was never mentioned between them, and there was no reason to think that his farewell visit and the circumstances belonging to it were ever known of. He wrote regularly to Cicely, but had little success to tell about, having moved from place to place without finding lasting or well-paid employment.

Still, the belief in his love, and the hope that good fortune might yet come to him, made Cicely happier than she would otherwise have been. Her step-father was very kind to her, but she

missed her mother greatly, the more so from the constant occupation her illness had caused.

Then a break came in the every day routine of the farm life by the unlocked for appearance of a young man, the son of a scapegrace nephew of Mr. Butterworth's, who had many years before gone to Australia.

This young man, Robert Fearon, seemed inclined to make the Mill Farm his home, but Mr. Butterworth did not fall in with this, and after a time he gave Fearon a sum of money, some good advice, and counselled his return to Australia.

It was during the second winter after George Stanford's departure, when one night, notwithstanding Mr. Butterworth's adhesion to his custom of locking up every place himself, and taking the keys to his room, the house was robbed; the oak parlour broken into, and his desk taken away.

It was a large, but portable mahogany desk, brass clamped and heavy, and in it he always kept money for his current expenditure, which, from the number of people he employed, was sometimes considerable.

Unable to pick the lock, the thieves had carried off the desk and smashed it probably with a crow-bar found lying beside it among the trees hard by.

The money in it was gone, and also numerous papers, among them various securities for money lent and invested. These, however, they made nothing by, as prompt measures were at once taken regarding them.

Mr. Butterworth was excessively annoyed about this affair. He was never willing to talk of it, but it seemed to vex him more than it need have done, the actual loss being between forty and fifty pounds, certainly not an amount for a man in his circumstances to brood over.

Some time after this, two months or so, on the high road just where the shady lane leading to the Mill Farm turned off, a wealthy grazier, Eveson by name, was dragged from his gig, and robbed of money, the produce of cattle he had sold that day. Two men disguised, and with crape masks, effected this.

Mr. Eveson roused the country to try and find them; offered a large reward himself, and got the county magistrates to offer another. The neighbourhood had always been peaceable until now, and they were not going to submit quietly to the loss of its good name.

Somehow Fearon, Mr. Butterworth's grand-nephew, was suspected in the matter. His haunts in the town were known to be low and bad, and ill repute had followed him from Sydney; where the doings of a noted gang of bush-rangers came to light about the time he sailed for England. Several of them were convicted, and among those who escaped was one who went among them by the name of Smith, which it was well known was not his own, and who was known to have left Sydney in the same ship by which Robert Fearon reached Plymouth.

Anyway, about the time Mr. Eveson was robbed, Fearon disappeared, to the infinite relief of Cicely, who had an unspoken idea about the stealing of her uncle's desk. Very strange as she now thought were the questions he had sometimes, when staying at the Mill Farm, asked her regarding her step-father's affairs, once in a persistent way, finding out whether it was always in the

last week of the month that he settled with his work people. It was the night after the money for this purpose was placed in his desk that it was stolen.

From that time Mr. Butterworth kept all his papers and any money that was in the house in his bedroom, using a secretary on the top of an old-fashioned chest of drawers. There he henceforth made up his accounts and wrote his letters, and on the table by the bed there lay now, along with the house keys, a pair of loaded pistols, while downstairs more secure shutters and alarm bells were arranged.

The autumn that year was very hot. Mr. Butterworth had a large extent of ground under wheat, which was cut but not stacked, when, on a glowing afternoon, the sky suddenly becoming cloudy and the barometer indicating change, Mr. Butterworth came in, tired and over-heated, and, sitting down in the oak parlour, said he was done up going about to hurry the men, and he asked Cicely to get him a draught of cider.

She was not long going for it, but on her return her step-father had fallen back in the chair he sat in, his face was purple, his breathing laboured, and he was insensible.

A man was sent off with a swift horse to bring the nearest doctor, and meantime Mr. Butterworth was conveyed to bed, and such simple means used for his relief as those about him were acquainted with.

But his time was come, and though during the night he regained a partial consciousness, and several times strove to speak, it was but to sink into deeper coma, and on the next day he died.

Except for the servants, Cicely was utterly alone, nor were there any relatives to come to her. If any such existed, they were distant, and utterly unknown. Her father was a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and her mother, a native of Yorkshire, always spoke of herself as the last of her family.

In this time of affright and loneliness her chief friend and counsellor was Mr. Evans, the rector of the parish, and by his advice she acted. He was surprised to find how little she knew of her step-father's affairs, and nothing whatever of how far she might personally be concerned in them. To ascertain if Mr. Butterworth had left any directions that ought in the first instance to be carried out, Mr. Evans advised Cicely at once to look for his will, but no such document could be found.

The secretary and every place were papers had ever been kept were searched in vain. Application was made at the Bank where Mr. Butterworth kept his account, and to a solicitor who did business for him, but no will was heard of.

On the day of the funeral, Robert Fearon, who was supposed to be out of the country, arrived, and in full black attire took the place of chief mourner.

Everyone avoided him, but no one had a right to say him nay.

He very soon ascertained the absence of a will, and he told Cicely that in case no such document existed to invalidate his claim, he would, as heir-at-law, apply for letters of administration, and meantime he would live at the Mill Farm and look after things, but she need not hurry herself with her own arrangements, he did not wish to

inconvenience her, and she could remain for a time at any rate. He would come on the following day, and she would be good enough to have the room he had previously occupied prepared for him.

Mr. Evans went home to consult with his wife, the result of which was, that she returned with him to the Mill Farm, and helped Cicely to pack up everything that belonged to her, and that had been her mother's; while Mr. Evans, aided by a carpenter, examined every place where papers could be hid, for Cicely told them how, ever since the robbery, her step-father had been different in his ways, secretive and suspicious, but there was no will found, and she was thus left without any maintenance.

It was all too sudden to be realized, and while outwardly calm and doing whatever the Evans' advised, Cicely felt like one acting a part from which she would presently return to her former self.

It was considered better for her to wait until Fearon assumed possession, for that he would do so, they did not doubt, but then leave at once; the Rectory was open to her—to remain at the Mill Farm with Fearon there, was not to be thought of.

On leaving that day Mr. Evans promised to drive over the next morning and see how things stood, and doing so he found Cicely like one dazed, with an open note in her hand.

It was from Fearon, telling her he would be there in the evening and would have some friends with him, and he wished her to have a good dinner ready for them.

Before that time Cicely was in the Rectory parlour, with Mrs. Evans trying to soothe and cheer her, and one of her late step-father's carts was coming up the road, conveying what belonged to her of this world's goods.

It will be understood now, how she came to be mistress of Saint Werburgh's female school.

There were no board schools in those days, no competitive examinations, and a vacancy having occurred, Mr. Evans' influence with the trustees was enough to obtain it for Cicely Ashton. No more kindly woman, honestly set to do what was required of her, could have been found. The teaching needed was simple, and according to a prescribed routine. It would now be called very insufficient, but it made homely industrious housewives, fit for the daily duties of the class they belonged to, and its foundation was rooted in those principles which have made England great.

Meantime Robert Fearon and the set he had brought about him rioted at the Mill Farm, and the oak parlour was the scene of orgies such as Mr. Butterworth never imagined. The former servants left, and very different people filled their places. Soon money began to run short. Probate was refused to Robert Fearon until he proved his father's death, and this he could not do, Fearon the elder, for some reason of his own was out of the way, and his son's assertion that he died when on a prospecting expedition, needed confirmation.

Meantime on Mr. Butterworth's investments the interest accumulated. Robert Fearon's precise knowledge of these investments seemed curious, but it availed him nothing until he could prove his heirship.

The mill hands all left; they could not stand

their new master. Then Fearon tried to let the mill, but the big wheel hung still and idle, for no man would pay rent with the chance that it might be to the wrong person.

And so the reign of misrule went on as long as money could be had; but this was not for ever, and after a time the furniture of the old house began to be sent into the town for sale. All outside effects had long before been disposed of, but so long as funds could be had, drinking and gambling went on at the Mill Farm.

Cicely Ashton meanwhile setting herself to her new duties, found much that was sympathetic to her kindly nature in the care of the little girls who formed her charge. Doubtless the change in circumstances would have been more keenly felt, but for the constant correspondence between her and George Stanfor, and the hope that not much more time would pass until he returned.

But it was in the second year of her life at Werburgh's that this hope was fulfilled, and even then Stanfor came home a poor man, finding, as many have done, that there is about the same difficulty in getting good situations in America as in England.

Once again Mr. Evans stood their friend. He had a relative holding a good position at Devonport, in the dockyard, and he prevailed on him to employ Stanfor. The place he got was poorly paid at first, but progressive in standing and value, and having saved a little money in America, he took a small house near his office, and began to furnish it.

At last their faithful affection was rewarded; a quiet wedding, a short honeymoon sight-seeing in London, and Cicely entered her husband's home.

Almost the first object that greeted her eyes was the old clock of the Mill Farm. George had seen it among lumber at a broker's, bought it for a trifle, and brought it home in triumph as a surprise for her.

And poor Cicely was so delighted to see its dear familiar face, and heavy black case!

She thanked George over and over again for buying it, and finally made him get into it, to see whether he could go through the door, and fit inside as well as in the hour of peril when he took refuge there.

George, however, proved to be a good deal stouter, and looking at the matter leisurely and coolly, it did seem wonderful how he had been able to breathe shut up there.

There was a recess in their hall, and they agreed to place the clock there. It was a little too high, but that could be remedied by taking a few inches off below, as the block that formed the lower part of the clock was needlessly deep. George, who was handy with tools, had done many things towards fitting up the house, and the next morning cautiously laying the old clock on its side, he marked six inches to be taken off the block, and began to saw across it.

Cicely was standing by, and he said it would be more easily cut than he expected, for it seemed not to be solid.

One or two more vigorous thrusts with the saw, and, "Hallo!" he exclaimed, "what's here!" The saw was passing through paper. A chisel and hammer were quickly got, and the strongly-formed little compartment, that had seemed solid, opened —there lay the will! Mr. Butterworth's will!

along with all the deeds and receipts belonging to his various investments, and everything was left to Cicely; she was his sole heiress! His "dear, dutiful daughter," he called her.

She thought she knew now what he meant to say when in the short interval of consciousness he struggled so to speak; for the broken words she remembered so well, and that she never could understand, now seemed to her to refer to this hiding-place.

The robbery of his desk seemed to leave Mr. Butterworth doubtful of all ordinary places for security, and probably he alone knew that a secret spring at the back of the clock opened the box-like hollow that formed about half of the block the clock rested on.

They took it back with them to the Mill Farm, and in time they repaired the ravages of Mr. Fearon, and the old place became itself again, and even better than before, from a little modern ornamentation.

They gave Fearon money to go back to Australia, but whether he went they never knew.

Cicely and her husband often talked of how wonderfully things had turned out.

If the clock had not been sold out of the old house, the will would probably never have been found, and thus the doings that in themselves were so evil, brought about the fulfilment of Mr. Butterworth's just and good intentions.

• • •
LUTCHINA;
OR, THE BLUE LAKE.
BY A. POCKLINGTON.
• • •
PART I.—continued.
CHAPTER III.
THE LEGEND OF THE BLUE LAKE.

Was it one or many days after this that Lutchina, as she drove her goats down from their mountain pasture, met the stranger again? And was it one or many times after this, again, that they met—now in the hot noon-tide, when the woods smelt of incense; now at sunset, when the snow-peak flamed, and flashes of red fire dyed the breast of the river? Ah, well, when one is happy one counts nothing—neither hours, nor days, nor years. Sometimes, as twilight hovered gently over the valley, the stranger would enter the mill and talk with the miller, while Lutchina played with her bobbins in the open doorway, and Matthias brooded over his models—strange models, not always of delicate wood-carving, but oftener of twisted wheels or piston-rods. They asked no questions of him, not even his name. They did not wonder that he should linger about their valley; there was nothing strange in it; doubtless he lodged in the little town beyond Wolfthurn, and spent long days trying to portray the ivy-mantled turrets of the Baron's Schloss, to snatch the weird beauty of the Blue Lake, as so many had done before him. His visits were received by the miller with baleful pleasure, by Matthias in grave silence; but Lutchina drank in the sweet magic of his voice as a bee sips in honey.

The Baron had welcomed his step-son heartily.

He was growing old, and dearly as he loved his Schloss, full to overflowing of rich art trophies, it was daily becoming more desolate to him.

For whom, indeed, was he gathering together these treasures, he pondered sadly the morning after the Count's return, as he dusted the face of a Clyte?

Melchior admired these things, but he loathed the walls that sheltered them. When he was dead and gone, what would become of the old Schloss? Would Melchior dwell in it—Melchior who shivered like a woman when the north wind blew? Ah, why had he made that rash vow to his beautiful Francesca as she lay on her death-bed thirty years ago? The vow that sent the child he destined as his heir to be nurtured amongst her people in the hot south, that as the years grew permitted but an infrequent meeting between the two.

Once and twice the child and his tutors had spent the short, bright, mountain summers with him, but at the first breath of the winter wind his merry spirits were hushed; he drooped before their very eyes so that his step-father had to send him back to the ripening sunshine of the south, whilst he remained to revel amid the strong frosts of the north.

Melchior grew to manhood, but he never loved his home. He would remain by the Baron for weeks to leave him for years. He had a painter's restless spirit, and it impelled him to wander to and fro over the face of the earth, he said.

The Baron shook his head over the problem, and raised mournful eyes to the beautiful face on the wall, whose crimson lips and lustrous eyes smiled down upon him from many a corner of the Schloss.

It was then that he felt a hand on his shoulder and heard Melchior's voice ask—

"By the way, father, who lives now in the old mill by the bridge?"

"Some one else must tell you," answered the Baron; "I never remember my peasant's names, though, alas, I have all the Greek gods at my fingers' ends. The man has been there many years, I believe, and is always behind with the rent—a taciturn old curmudgeon, they say, with a pretty daughter. I can tell you no more; never having occasion to pass that way, for my knees are growing stiff, son, and my children"—he looked round on his statues—"give me plenty to do. But why do you ask?"

"Simply that they were kind to me last night."

"Ah, in the storm. Then you saw the pretty daughter?"

"I saw the pretty daughter," answered the Count dreamily.

The Baron sighed.

"It is time you gave up looking into pretty faces, and enshrined one within your heart," he said. "I long, Melchior, to see thy wife beside thee, and children around my knees."

Melchior answered nothing. He was a man of strange moods.

The summer merges into autumn; already new snow has fallen on the white peak and the crags around it; in the mornings a little heap of dead leaves lies under each tree at Wolfthurn; the breath of winter is in the air.

One day Count Melchior is busy copying a lurid

Salvator Rosa, whilst his father stands beside him looking into a portfolio of sketches. He comes to one at length, which he holds before him, and criticizes silently. Then he says—

"Son, this is a beautiful face—whose is it?"

"That? Lutchina Graf's — your miller's daughter," answers the Count carelessly. But the glance he shoots across his father's shoulder at the arch smiling face is not so careless.

"It is only a rough sketch," he adds.

"There is fire and soul in it—the execution is perfect—the subject worthy of your brush," answers the Baron, a judge in art. "I marvel that I have never come upon the girl, since for many years she has lived close by."

"The king seldom hears of the beggar at his gate."

Is she a witch, this Lutchina? No more is said, but the blue eyes of the portrait sink into the Baron's breast.

The breath of winter is in the air, and Count Melchior still lingers at the Schloss. Says the Baron's steward and foster-brother, as the two pace a forest-alley one cold morning, "If the Count can be coaxed over this winter he will like the taste of it."

"When the first flake of snow falls he will be off like a swift; it is ever so," sighs the Baron.

"He has been absent five long years; he should stay."

"That stands to reason," replies the Baron sorrowfully; "only, my good Jossi, he prefers roaming. Men, unlike rabbits, are not all cut to one pattern."

The Baron is right. No sooner is the ground whitened by the first snow than the Count bids him farewell. He holds out a hand that trembles with cold.

"I cannot help it," he says. "I am a child of the south."

But before he goes, there have been some beautiful days, days as if a gap has been rent in the curtain of autumn, and summer has peeped through. On one of these the Count strolls to the edge of the Blue Lake, for he sees Lutchina there. She blushes a rosy red, and her eyes droops as he comes and stands beside her.

"What are you thinking of, little one?" he asks, for Lutchina gazes pensively into the water.

"I am thinking how beautiful it all is—the world, everything!" With the words she raises her eyes, and looks at him, eyes wistful though suffused with joy.

"And you are the most beautiful of all!"

A tender smile steals to her lips.

"You say that too often!" she says, shaking her head. "No, the scene around us is more beautiful than I. It is old as the world, yet always looks fresh and new, unchangeable in its beauty. I shall grow old and die."

"You are sad—what ails you, child?"

Her friend the artist's arm is around her, she trembles a little.

"I am quite happy—yet this spot somehow awes me. It is so still, so beautiful—and the lake, they say, bewitched."

"Let us climb into this old boat, and make friends with the witch then," he laughs. They do so, and with one sweep of his strong arm the boat shoots far out upon the glassy waters.

The scene is beautiful, as Lutchina says, beau-

tiful in a strange weird way. The Blue Lake lies shrined within an expanse of soft turf, tufted with waving cotton-grass and ferns—every rock, every stone that borders it is wrapt in a mantle of crimson and golden moss, into which the foot sinks as on velvet. There is a ring round it of sombre firs, the hoary crags that loom above them are blackened and stained by storms, and seem to grip the air with jagged fingers—the snow-peak glistens in mid-distance, a thing of infinite beauty. Over all is the blue sky, and the sunshine melts into the lake.

The boat drifts into the centre, and they look over; there is no sound but the throb of their own hearts.

Bewitched! Well, it might be so. At the top the water is sapphire-blue, down below one would say flickering moonbeams stole to and fro through the branches of the dead pines that strew its sands. In some places these drowned trees lie tangled together and gleam like marble—they are turned to stone. In others their leafless boughs stand black and upright within the water, or are twisted like the limbs of a swimmer in his agony. These last look to touch the surface of the lake, but the boat glides over them, and not a hand could reach to touch the snake-like branches. The water is clear as crystal, but this silver transparency serves not to mirror but to mask its depth.

"Truly, it is a strange spot," muses the artist as he raises his head from idly counting the pebbles beneath him.

"Doubtless you have heard its story," says Lutchina in hushed tones.

"Not from your lips, little one. Tell it me." He smiles, and she obeys.

"Well, it is a very old story—so old that no one knows when it happened. Indeed, the beginning is quite forgotten, and it is only the end that is remembered, and that but dimly. It is said, you must know, that long ages ago a lord of the Schloss married a fair maiden, with whom he dwelt very happily for some years. And then war broke out, and he rode away at the head of his vassals to do battle. He came home covered with glory, but after that he was no longer happy with his young wife. The legend does not say what had happened to change their lives—it is so old now-a-days—but it must have been something grievous, for a day came that he said she must leave Wolfthurm and his side for ever."

"We will say she was not true to him," murmurs Lutchina's friend smiling into her earnest face. "It is a little fault women have."

"A little fault!" Lutchina's blue eyes open wide. Then she continues: "The poor young wife loved her lord very truly, I make no doubt, but the legend is quite silent about that matter. It goes on to say that the lady refused to obey her husband's commands until he granted her one boon. And this for his honour's sake he was obliged to do. So on the day she was to leave the castle, she gave orders that all the people should assemble on the brink of the Blue Lake, and when she heard they were gathered together, and her husband on his horse beside them, she kissed her little children, and closed the door upon them, and walked white and still as death to the lake's edge. There she stepped into a boat, and when it reached the centre of the lake she stood up before all the people. And she told them that there were some

who, having mistrusted, had sullied her fair fame in her good lord's sight, and that she was about to yield herself up to the spirit who dwelt in the Blue Lake—for the waters were enchanted even in those days. They were not to fear for her, for she had no fear for herself, knowing her innocence. Were she guilty the waters would for ever shroud her within their bosom—but if innocent they would cast her forth again. Then before the awe-stricken throng could move she flung herself down into the silvery lake, and disappeared from their eyes."

"Ah—then after all she had not been true to him!"

"Oh, but yes!" answers Lutchina softly. "The waters washed her up again as she had said they would, but it was on the banks of the Lutchina. The river flows out from the lake over yonder in a deep and narrow stream. Another stream it is supposed wells up within the heart of the lake, perhaps through one of its deep chasms; for it is always full to overflowing. Ah see," cries Lutchina breathlessly, as she peers over the edge of the boat, "we are over one of these terrible places now—the very one, maybe, into which the poor lady cast herself!" And she points to a large fissure in the bed of the lake where all seems black and bottomless, and over which the boat has drifted. It is one of several yawning chasms that meet the wondering gaze, and is fringed by sharp rocks that glisten like giant teeth eager for other prey than the speckled trout which swim above them.

"The waters washed her up again—and then this lady and her lord lived happily for ever after," says the artist smiling at the maiden's earnest mien.

"Oh, no," says Lutchina. "When they found her she was dead. Still, you see, she had proved her innocence."

"What mattered that since she was dead? Life is sweet," murmurs the painter as he gazes into Lutchina's beautiful eyes.

"Truly, yes," she answers in dreamy tones, "but if the sunshine of love and trust lies not on it —?"

He laughs his mellow laugh. "Come," says he, "we are bewitched, the one or other of us! I do not love this melancholy spot, let us away." And he rows the boat back to shore, and walks with her through the woods.

The next day the wind blew from the north, and soon after, as has been said, the valley was filled with snow.

Then the Count bade farewell to his step-father, but he paused at the mill-door on his way southward. The miller wished him "God-speed," for the first time for many days the eyes of Matthias brightened, but Lutchina's voice trembled as she said, "You leave us then?"

"Yes, I freeze here," he answered simply. "Will you let me out through the gate?"

She followed him into the garden as he bade, and the snowy ground seemed to have cast its reflection on her face. The sky looked black against the white tops of the mountains, a few stars shone down on them.

"Little one, we do not say good-bye, you and I," said the painter as they paused by the gate.

"You will come again," said Lutchina faintly, "ah, yes!"

"With the first beams of next summer's sun."

He had never kissed her since that once in the twilight; he stooped now, and kissed her again, and the touch of his warm lips sent the blood leaping to Lutchina's face. Then a blast of wind swept between them—it flung some loose tears into her eyes; when she had wiped them off she stood alone.

IV.

THE HERR BARON.

One day the Baron felt more than ordinarily lonely. "I am not world-wearied as my son," he thought to himself. "I need not go beyond these walls for pleasure and profit, and yet —. My children, my children, do you begin to pall upon me?" he asked, apostrophizing the beautiful inanimate objects about him—the marble Psyches, the bronze fauns, the thousand and one creations of master-minds dead long centuries since.

Then a strange light awoke in his blue eyes. He looked out on the winter sunshine trickling through the pines.

"King Cophetua shall go seek his beggar-maid," he said, and smiled. And so it happened that on this day, as Lutchina walked homewards with Matthias as he came from hunting on the mountains, they met a tall stately figure, which they knew to be the Baron's, not far from the mill. He saw Lutchina, but he did not look at Matthias. They saluted, and he passed on. What could bring the old gentleman out on such a cold day, they wondered. But he paused to draw little pictures on the snow with his stick, to marvel at the strange beauty of this peasant maid, to say within himself (had he then paid many secret visits to his son's portfolio?), "Melchior's portrait is but the incomplete sketch he called it!" After that, the Baron walked so often by the mill that he became quite a familiar figure in its landscape, and a pleasant one. He had a quiet dignity of mien and a graceful carriage, though his yellow hair was silvering fast, and his blue eyes were somewhat dimmed.

A day came when the Baron paused to speak with Lutchina at the gate—another when he entered the mill.

The mill was no longer what it had been, that summer evening when the painter craved shelter within its walls. Spring was at hand now, but it had been a hard winter—a winter that tries the resources of the poor. The carved coffers were gone; the bright bi's of porcelain on which the artist's eye had fondly lingered no longer stood on the shelves. The miller had shown his daughter an empty purse when she remonstrated on the sale of these her household gods. "We starve," he muttered. The tears dropped from Lutchina's eyes, but she could say nothing, for it was true, or seemed so. Nevertheless, the first beams of next summer's sun were yet to shine, and then? Lutchina would dream many dreams to herself in those days.

The Baron dreamt dreams also, and seemed to grow young again. He no longer spent the whole day immersed in study; dust thickened on his

bronzes, a spider built its nest in the unfinished catalogue of his museum treasures, the Baron walked abroad daily, and even joined in a wolf hunt. He had been a great hunter in his prime, and seemed not to have forgotten the trick of it. The eyes of the foresters sparkled. Worthy fellows, they thought the good old times were come again!

In due course came spring, and then followed summer; the swallows returned to build under Lutchina's window, red roses glowed against the dark woodwork of the porch, but with the first beams of the summer's sun there came nothing else. Day by day Lutchina drove her goats to their pasture, and strained eager eyes along the road—scarce a twilight fell but found her loitering by the bridge, yet still the dark-browed painter came not, and still she murmured through her proud tears, "He will come." Autumn passed, and all too soon the pitiless winter with its hardships and bitter penury was upon them—a long winter as it proved, when the black bread grew scarce, and the rich colour faded from the maiden's cheeks.

"Oh, you should not stay with us. Go—go!" she cried petulantly one bitter day to Matthias.

The miller's man looked at her, and his haggard face flushed.

"My father says he can pay you no wages—that you have had nothing for months—and yet you stay and starve, working like a slave. Why do you so?" asked Lutchina, her lips quivering.

"My mother is dead; for whom then should I work if not for you?" answered grave Matthias. Then he caught her cold hand into his, and shook a little. "Lutchina, I must stay, for I love you."

"Yes—I know," said the miller's daughter, tears creeping to her eyes. "You have loved me since the day you crossed our threshold—you have told me so. Yet have I nothing to give you, Matthias, nothing in return but sister-love."

"So! and I would cherish you—I would die for you." Matthias raised his serious eyes, and looked into the gloom beyond Lutchina's head like a man given to dreams, as he added, "But it is always so! We love best the unattainable."

He dropped her hand, and went back with a sigh to his work, and Lutchina stood sad and shivering by the window. The snow fell drearily, and an icy wind blew; it seemed to pierce her heart.

Now and again through the winter the Baron called at the mill. He had never thought other of his peasantry than of simple-minded folk, who were content with to-day's bread and to-morrow's sunshine—but from the first these three had appealed to him differently. He would sit where the stranger had sat, and discourse with the miller, and over Matthias's models he grew quite interested, lending him books to study, and mildly bidding him be patient for that Rome was not built in a day. And at Lutchina he would look, but only dreamily, like an elderly man who would have liked just such a daughter. There seemed nothing to fear from him. To the miller his visits were pleasant enough; he liked to be seen and considered poor—especially by him who owned the soil. But at the first glint of the spring sunshine, the Baron's visits ceased, and the shadow deepened in the mill. For one night the old

miller called his daughter to him, and with his wizened face all aglow with exultation, bade her know that the lord of Wolfthurm desired her hand in marriage. Lutchina dropped at his knees, white and speechless.

"Not that, not that!" she cried.

Her father's eyes gleamed with anger.

"Just that, and nothing less!" was his rough answer. "Perhaps you are frightened? Well, you have led a wild life, and now you must be tamed a little in silks and satins, but there will be nothing to fear. The Baron loves and would make a lady of you. And you are beautiful, Lutchina!"

"I can never wed him!"

"But you shall!" hissed the old man furiously. "See here, we are starving—the mill has had its day, and gets no work—will you let your father be cast out to the dogs in his old age? For that is what it must come to. I have no money—the rent has not been paid this twelvemonth."

Lutchina laid her head on her father's breast, and sobbed as she had done when she was a child and the miller a better man.

"Father," she murmured, "bid him wait. When the first beams of the summer's sun fall he shall have my answer. Be patient till then."

And the miller was patient till then, in his way. That is he did not pester the girl too much about this strange marriage, but he managed to catch a bad cold, and would have been at death's door for want of a doctor, had not Matthias parted with one of his loved models, and so purchased food and medicine. All of which Lutchina knew, and in secret wept over, till, what with the lack of black bread and firewood, the maiden grew white and thin, and her strong heart quite subdued. So there came a day, the summer then verging towards its end, when she let the Baron take her by the hand, and kiss her. She had been driving her goats home as usual, and now these browsed about them where they had met, their bells mingling musically with the murmur of the river. The sun was sinking, and its red shafts dyed Lutchina's face and made a glory of her hair.

Her eyes looked southwards, nor fell as the Baron laid his lips to hers, and wondered he had been patient so long.

"I love you very dearly—I will be most good to you, child," he whispered tenderly. And so sealed Lutchina's troth.

That night they were married, for the Baron would wait no longer.

Lutchina stood up beside him in the old chapel of the Schloss, and before its marble altar they were made one.

And only the moonbeams, whose pale sister she seemed, and the miller and his man, and old Jossi, the steward, knew that on this night the Baron von Wolfthurm had taken to wife Lutchina Graf, the peasant's daughter. For a travelling-carriage was drawn up beside the door of the chapel, and once the ceremony was over the Baron handed the Baroness into it, and they drove quickly away.

(To be continued.)

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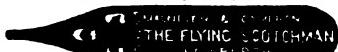
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE MYSTERY OF COMPTON PLACE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

BY LAURA VALENTINE,

Author of "A Puzzle for the Police," "The Knight's Ransom," &c. &c.

••••

CHAPTER I.

IN THE GREENWOOD.

THE real story of some lives is stranger than the wildest fiction ever written; and such has been that of my sister Gladys, which I am now about to relate. I have often wondered how some of the events in it could possibly have happened; yet, perhaps, hers is not a singular experience. Similar—or at least equally strange—incidents may have occurred in other families, though carefully concealed; the proverbial skeleton in the closet, the ghastly shadow that darkens the inner life, may be found in only too many homes, if we had but the key.

We lost our mother—Gladys and I—when I was but eight years old, and she only three. A little brother had died between our births, to the great regret of my father, whose property was entailed on male heirs.

His sorrow for the loss of his beautiful wife was deep and lasting. For years he could not bear to reside in the home she had blessed; therefore he let it, and travelled constantly, as if seeking to forget his grief in change of scene. He left Gladys and me to the care of his sister, a Mrs. Drury, a childless widow, possessed of much learning and many accomplishments, but cold and reserved in manner, and with no liking for children. She did us full justice as to education and moral training, but, missing the mother's love and sympathy, we clung more than is even usual with sisters to each other. I was so much older than Gladys, that she seemed like a little daughter to me, and I delighted in petting and fondling her.

She was the brightest, gayest, and most beautiful child I ever saw.

She looked like a dancing sunbeam in Aunt Ella's old house, with her floating golden hair, and great, bright blue eyes. She had a lovely voice, and from her earliest childhood sang sweetly, and with wonderful expression. To see her dancing about on the lawn amongst the flowers, singing her wild, untaught songs, was to behold a very embodiment of joy.

I said one day to Aunt Ella—

"Look at Gladys! How joyous she is. Surely she never can or will know a sorrow."

Aunt Ella shook her head.

"The characters that feel pleasure most keenly feel pain with equal acuteness," she answered; "Gladys is more likely to suffer in the world than you are, Mabel, with your calm, even temperament. I could wish she were more like you."

The house in which we lived with Aunt Ella was the Dower House attached to Compton Place; a fine old mansion about a couple of miles distant from it. The Dower House was a picturesque building nestling amidst trees; with a large orchard and paddock attached to it, and with a lawn and flower-garden that were Mrs. Drury's especial care and pride. Moreover, the woodlands intervening between Compton Place and the Dower House were practically ours also, for the place had long been abandoned by its owner, and we could ramble about the woods and park at our own sweet will. Within a certain radius Aunt Ella permitted us children to do so, and we dearly loved those green coverts with their lovely wild flowers and ferns, and store of wild strawberries. The Dower House was very much out of the world. It was five miles from any town, and two from the church and village; but Aunt Ella had a pony-carriage, which enabled us to visit both very regularly. Still, our few acquaintances were not near neighbours. They consisted only of the Rector and Mrs. Strictland, the doctor, and a retired officer's family who lived in the village near the rectory; consequently, we knew very little of the world and drew the closer to each

other, because we had no companions of our own age.

Two events occurred to break the monotony of our lives, however, when I was about sixteen. Our father married a second time; and Mr. Strictland engaged a curate, actually the first young man in the form of a gentleman who had ever visited at the Dower House! Him, however, we saw almost daily, for Aunt Ella, who was as I have said a highly cultured person, was delighted to have in him a sympathetic friend with whom she could talk of books and art, and she constantly invited him to her house. He sang very finely, and volunteered after a time to help us with our singing, an offer my aunt rather imprudently accepted; for the close companionship and sympathy of our tastes soon taught her eldest niece another lesson of which she never dreamed. Life for me had become a charmed existence, when suddenly my joy was darkened by a letter from my father, informing me that as I was now eighteen he thought it time for me to go into society, and should therefore relieve my aunt of her charge of me. "I will come for you myself," he added, "and your stepmother will give you a glad welcome to our Paris home."

I ought to have mentioned before that the second Mrs. Lee had become the mother of twin girls, and our father having thus to provide for four daughters out of his yearly income, had resolved, for economy's sake, to live on the Continent, and continue to let his paternal home.

The announcement that we were to be parted was the first sorrow Gladys and I had known, and it was a bitter one. There was no chance of our meeting for some years to come. Aunt Ella had given hints of a desire to adopt Gladys; and we feared that my father, overburdened with daughters, would be only too likely to consent to her wish.

Gladys, clinging passionately to me, declared that she could not live without me; that she should not be able to bear it. Aunt Ella showed more sympathy with the child than I had expected, and did her best to comfort her. She released her from all studies that she might be more with me, and left us almost entirely to ourselves.

It was June, and an unusually warm summer; we therefore were much out of doors, and on one brilliant sunshiny day determined to spend a whole morning and afternoon in the woods; it might be for the last time, as our father's arrival though uncertain would be soon.

We started with very sad hearts, but as we plunged into the green depths of the woodland the calm and sweetness of Nature exercised their usual soothing influence. Our spirits rose, and soon Gladys, whose songs had ceased for days, was singing, in her sweet young voice, "Under the Greenwood Tree."

We were following the course of a rippling stream, that made a soft accompaniment to her song, while from above floated the hymn of the lark, and from the thickets came the cooing of the wood-pigeons. The great beeches sheltered us from the noonday sun; tall ferns rustled about our feet, and blue-bells nodded at us from amongst tall foxgloves and wild rose-bushes.

We wandered on and on, exploring a hitherto unvisited part of the wood, till at length Gladys exclaimed—

"Mabel, there are the chimneys of Compton Place! How far we have come!"

It was true. We had walked under the wood spell for two miles, unheedingly; and another step or two brought Compton Place into full view.

It was a grand old Elizabethan house, with many gables, fine oriel windows, and a noble porch. The sunlight fell now on its many casements, making them glitter like diamonds, and the light breeze wafted a trail of ivy from a buttress.

"Oh! Gladys," I said, "what a fine old place it is! I must try and sketch it. Let us sit down and rest, and I will see if I can make a drawing of it, for you to keep as a souvenir."

Gladys eagerly assented to my proposal. I had brought my sketch-book, while she carried a basket with our luncheon.

She put her burden down at once, and helped me to find the best point of view for my sketch.

When this important point had been settled, I took my seat on the roots of a giant beech-tree, and commenced work; Gladys lolling on the turf beside me, and occasionally criticising or advising.

"Mabel," she said, after rather a long silence, "do you know why this grand old place has been left unoccupied so long?"

"Aunt Ella told me once," I answered, "that the owner had married a lady in whose family madness was hereditary for the sake of possessing it, and that, as might have been expected, the marriage proved a wretched one. The poor lady went raving mad, leaving her husband (who was obliged to place her in an asylum) with the charge of an idiot son. She went mad at Compton Place, and Mr. Compton suffered so much here that he grew to hate the place, and left it to caretakers. By-and-by stories of its being haunted got about, and the people in charge refused to stay there. Then Mr. Compton just shut it up; and so it has remained ever since."

"Where does he live himself now?" she asked.

"I don't know, but he has other fine places. Miss Compton, the lady he married, was a great heiress. He took her name."

"When he dies will the idiot son have this Place, Mabel?" she asked.

"Yes, of course; only he would be taken care of by guardians, I suppose."

"It seems a great pity that he should have it," she said thoughtfully, "since it can be of no use to him. Mabel, I have a perfect horror of idiots!"

"Don't say that, Gladys. You should feel only pity for such unfortunate creatures."

"But I don't! I feel loathing for people like Jim Brown."

"He is exceptionally repulsive, perhaps," I said; "but you must not let yourself loathe afflicted people."

Jim Brown was a village idiot of whom Gladys had always been afraid.

"I will try and not feel so," she said simply.

Then she proposed that we should have luncheon, but it was yet too early; and I laughingly suggested that she should find some way of amusing herself.

"Can one get into the Place?" she asked.

"No, I don't think you can. It is locked up, I suppose."

"Well," said the child restlessly "I should like to walk round the house, and gather a few

flowers in the grounds, I think, while you go on with your sketch." And she rose from the old tree-root on which she had been sitting.

"Don't be long gone, Gladys, nor go out of sight," I said.

"Why? There is no human being here, or near the Place, Mabel," she said laughing, "and you don't believe in ghosts, you know."

She ran blithely off as she spoke, and was still in sight (indeed the house was only at a little distance—just far enough off for good sketching), when a footprint in the ferns startled me, and, looking up, I beheld the curate by my side.

"Who could have thought of seeing you here, Miss Lee," he said, with a pleased smile, "and alone, too?"

"Oh, no," I answered, "Gladys is with me; she has just run off to look closer at the Place."

"I wonder," said he, "that Mrs. Drury likes you two young ladies to go so far afield alone; you are quite two miles from home."

"What is there to fear," I asked laughing, "in these lonely woods?"

"You might meet gypsies or rough men," he replied gravely; "the near railways have made rural solitudes scarcely as safe as they used to be."

"Aunt Ella did not tell us where to go to-day," I said.

"Perhaps she trusted to your keeping within your usual limits," he said. "Let me persuade you to go back with me."

"Oh," I said, "I must really finish my sketch. It is the best I have ever done."

He glanced at it.

"It is very nice," he said, "very clever. Well, then, I will wait till you have finished. I really do not like to leave two solitary damsels in this place."

And he sat down beside me on the turf. Then he began to speak of my approaching departure, and of the countries I should see with my father, who had spoken of taking me to Italy and Germany; and I believe we both forgot Gladys, till at last I saw that my sketch was far enough advanced to be finished at home, and I said, with a sudden recollection of the time that must have passed since Gladys left me—

"Where can my sister be? She has been away long enough to explore the grounds a hundred times."

"Let us go and look for her," he said. "I hope she has not strayed far."

I tied up my portfolio, and we walked towards the Place.

The great gates were always open, and we went up the weed-overgrown avenue, calling "Gladys" as we advanced, but no answer came.

"Where can she be?" I asked, growing alarmed.

"Perhaps she is in the house," he answered, "for look, the hall-door is open. Some one may be showing it to her. I will go in and see if she is there, and you had better walk round the house by this ruined flower-garden; she may be there, *most* probably she is, I think. If we separate we shall not miss her."

I agreed to this arrangement as best, and walked down a tangled path, calling "Gladys, Gladys," while Mr. Clifford ran up the steps and entered the hall of Compton Place.

Getting no answer to my calls, I grew very uneasy, and hurried onwards. Suddenly a rustling

of leaves—very slight, but instantly caught by my anxiously listening ear—attracted me, and looking in the direction from whence it came, I saw, framed in the trees as it were, the most hideous face I ever beheld. It was that of a woman grinning at me in a ghastly manner, with scarred features, and great, coal-black, terrible eyes. I was so startled that I turned; fled back through the paths I had already traversed, and dashing into the hall, cried, "Mr. Clifford! Mr. Clifford!"

He emerged from a room on the right of the entrance, looking pale and troubled.

"Oh!" I cried, "I have been so frightened!"

"And so I fear has your sister," he answered gravely; "she is here, and ill."

I followed him at once into the room, and saw Gladys there, pale and with closed eyes, lying on a moth-eaten couch.

By her side on a chair stood a glass of water.

"Gladys, my Gladys!" I cried, "what is it?"

She opened her eyes and raised them to mine, but answered only by a moan.

"Do not ask her any questions yet," said Mr. Clifford, "she has only just recovered from a swoon. I found her lying insensible at the bottom of the stairs, and brought her here at once. Happily your basket furnished a glass for me to get some water in, and it has revived her."

"She must have been frightened by that awful woman who terrified me," I said; and I related the adventure that had befallen me, adding, "Could the woman have been Mrs. Compton?"

"No," he said, "Mrs. Compton is very small and fair, with large blue eyes and light hair, and she is shut up in a lunatic asylum, the proprietor of which is a friend of mine. I cannot imagine who it could have been that you saw. I had better go into the garden and see if I can find your gorgon; if you will watch by Gladys."

Gladys instantly raised herself on the sofa.

"No, no," she cried, with a look of agony, "do not go, do not leave us, or I shall die of fear!"

Clifford at once went to her and took her hand.

"My poor child," he said, soothingly, "I will not leave you then. What has happened to alarm you so much?"

"I cannot tell you," she said, with a deep sigh, "I can never—never—never tell you what has happened in this awful house. And oh! Mr. Clifford—Mabel—do not ask me. Promise that you will never ask me."

(To be continued.)

A PILGRIM SONG.

GO, little song, because I may not go,
And be my pilgrim at her sacred shrine;
And when thou comest, bending very low,
Say, little song, that thou art mine.
And tell her, song, my pilgrim debonair,
That in thy scrip my heart thy shoulders bear,
And tell her, That is thine.

Then do thou look one look into her eyes,
My little pilgrim song, and if thou see
That she is kind as she is fair and wise,
Then tarry very joyfully.
But if her smile lie cold upon her lip,
Then bow thy head, but lay thou down thy scrip,
And come again to me.

A. S.

LONG-SHORING IN KENT.

BY W. SIME.

DOVER.

THE associations most people have with Dover are anything but exhilarating. They consist of a confused recollection of a crowd of saturnine faces jeering from the safe altitude of a pier, while a swift steamboat glides into position, after the run from Calais. There has been *sturm und drang* in the Channel; people have realized "what basins wos made for." The sight of the white cliffs has sickened them; they are coming back from leisure, from pleasure, from lounging, to anxiety, to work, to duty, and Dover somehow looms afterwards in recollection as the first incident of the return. All that is hard on Dover, it is an injustice. The long-shore man can pitch his tent in no more congenial quarter for the enjoyment of sea-loafing. You can come on it from Deal by a short sea journey. It is always well, when you are long-shoring, and have a few shillings in your pocket, to spend them on a boat; and a Deal boat is as swift as a racer, and a great deal cheaper. Take a boat, then, and clear out of the Downs to St. Margaret's. Walmer you pass, and low edges of unbroken shingle, and high, white cliffs, with here and there a clump of trees and a country seat, here and there a shining coastguardsman's house. And talking of coastguardsmen's houses, can any one say whether there is a more enviable destiny in England than to occupy one of them? Talk of an Oxford Fellowship, or a Bloomsbury Gate, or a 'pike before the last Act was passed, or an observatory on Ben Nevis, or a fort on the Rat River, or an Orkney lighthouse—these are indeed luxuries of meditative solitude; but commend me to the home of a coastguardsman. He is in touch with the sea and the land; has an awful executive authority; has nothing to do except to intercept the enemy, which never comes—yet he is not happy. I asked a Kent coastguardsman if he was happy, and he said no. I said the next time I came I would bring my tracts with me, and it only increased his seriousness. Yet I envy him his sweet place, his good boat, his spy-glass, his kitchen-garden, and his awful expression of executive authority. But that is by the way, and our boat is coming in on the beach of St. Margaret's. St. Margaret's I have only a few hours knowledge of, and am not, therefore, competent to say much of its internal resources in the way of society.

There is here, too, a coastguard establishment, immaculate, white, shining, and spy-glasses all about. There is a beach, shelving towards a cliff of clay and grass, and a sound hotel with terraces on the top. The forenoon I was there I went up to the hotel over the terraces; it was early spring, and there was nobody enjoying it. Not that there was nothing to enjoy. Sitting at a window and looking on the Channel no sea-view could be well more entrancing. On the right, towards Dover, there was the shoulder of a cliff, chalky but lofty, and having its complement of sea birds on the wing; boats lay on the beach, waves assailed them, and beyond the sea was France, visible in a delicate blue outline, with the intervening water full of tacking ships and cut-

ting steamers. A great sight truly! Let anybody who wishes to unite cosmopolitanism, fresh air, and good strong coffee, get into this St. Margaret's Hotel at midday. The coffee is not only excellent without cognac, it is better without it. I had two cups and two cognacs, and tried two spoonfuls of the coffee by itself. It was much better, and I was sorry, both times I added the cognac, only there was France just over the horizon, and anything for old associations. One of the nicest maids in the world, who had a great deal to say for herself without being a "lady help," and who didn't look as if it were necessary for one to speak to her as a preliminary to rushing at her and hugging her, hung about and explained all about St. Margaret's. She might have been the maid of Athens; but had any wretched visitor addressed her as "Zoe mou," he would have been quickly undeceived. Her motto evidently was to keep her "mou" to herself. But this is frivolous. However to Dover. Coming on it by boat—and talking of boats, I once wrote an article for a swell magazine, in which the printer substituted "bairn of boat" for "basin of bait;" it was awkward, but not fatal—how many are the historical associations! Round the cliff beneath the castle, and look on the town and the piers. Come down Freeman, Froude, Green, and guide-book. Associations! Here came that good man and worthy Christian, Charles II. Hear him, what he says when he lands, in the middle of the seventeenth century, from the other side, and about to take his throne. The mayor receives him, and has a Bible in hand. A bad man would have taken the Bible and dropped it in the dirt, or, having studied Descartes, would have replied, "Remove that bauble." But the good Christian surveyed it "from kiver to kiver," as the Americans say, surveyed it, and observed to the mayor, "It is the thing that I love above all things in the world." Who shall say that Dr. Johnson's judgment of Charles II. was wrong? The great doctor believed him to be the best of kings. True, he never gave a reason for his faith; but he was nearer him than we of the HOME CHIMES are, by a good many years, and probably had his own reasons, unknown to history, for thinking so. I once heard a professor from Scotland, who has written what "the great unpaid" would call an illustrious book upon John Milton, describe Charles II. as "a coffin-faced lout."

The professor, it must be remarked, was an expert in drawing-room deportment, and danced waltzes with such centrifugal dexterity that "coffin-faces" were common where he appeared. Had he, however, strolled into a house, near Goodwood, as I once did, under the impression that it was an hotel, and ordered about one of the scions of the House of Stuart, in the sad notion that he was a waiter, then he would have known better. For that scion showed me a portrait of Charles II. which was anything but "coffin-faced." But from a gay professor of drawing-room deportment, what can any one expect? However, this is not long-shoring; and indeed on this particular head it is difficult to get away from the illustrious procession of England's monarchs. Here came Alfred the Great, and William of Normandy, and King Stephen, and Magna Charta John, and the first Edward, and the fifth Henry, and blasphemous Queen Bess, and the first Charles, and the ubi-

quitous Cromwell, and any number more. Indeed, to long-shore here is to steep oneself in history, and in literature too, for did not the poet Arnold, while thus occupied, write .—

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits ;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone—the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd sand,
Listen ! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Another poet must have stood on a pinnacle over the sea hereabouts, and every commentator on "King Lear" should make a pilgrimage to the very summit, if only to realise what "local colour" is.

How fearful

And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low !
The crows and choughs that wing the midway o'er,
Show scarce so great as beetles ; half-way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade !
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head :
The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
Appear like mice : and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminished to her cock : her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight : the unreasoning surge,
That on the unnumbered idle pebbles chuse,
Cannot be heard so high.

The range for long-shoring at Dover covers the space from Shakespeare's Cliff to the South Foreland, and what variety there is to be sure ! The lighthouse itself, the new convict settlement, the castle, the esplanade, the quays, the arriving and departing steamers, the outgoing and incoming ships, the signalling of inward bound and outward bound in the Channel ; the red-coats and their habits, the sailors and theirs, the antiquities of church and hill—what a long-shoring it is to be sure ! Altogether beyond power of a gossiping article. The esplanade has characteristics of its own, not shared by other watering-places. There are lots of wounded soldiers about it; they are convalescent; they have done big things in the wars, and they have a little court of fair admirers round them. Who would not be a live British officer on these conditions ? A lieutenant in the line, or anything, just to get a smashed nose, a hit lip, a prodded breast or an amputated elbow, for glory and the sympathy of the little court of sisters and cousins ? I saw a young lieutenant on the esplanade—he had been dreadfully knocked about by bullets and sabres, but he had five protectors in skirts quarrelling for a word round his chair. Out of his royal weakness he patronized them all, and seemed to me to rather prefer a plainish-looking, silent girl, who kept a little out of sight. " And didn't we give it them, though ? " he was asking, as I passed. They had taken his chair too near the edge, and the broken fragments of a wave went over them all. Did they think of the salt in their dresses—these five pretty girls ? Not they. They rushed to wheel their warrior away from the cruel sea. They wiped him with handkerchiefs. There were none of them "so sorry." They were all on the edge of real tears,

and the quiet one took possession altogether and wheeled him inland. I lost sight of them offering him cups of coffee—one apiece—and sweet buns at the door of a French-looking restaurant. What a happy lieutenant he was !

Sympathy seems the key-note of this esplanade of Dover. For there are real sufferers long-shoring on it. There are no bankrupts, burst-up in the provincial cities, giving themselves the air of depressed millionaires. There are no steam-boat stewards, affecting to be commanders of great liners, with an income of £500 a-year. There are no prowlers of sixty, doing nothing in the world but lascivious mischief ; none of the half-world even—at least in spring. Beach and esplanade are one. Pilots and boatmen hobnob with admirals and colonels, and, however unfortunate your style may be, there are no sequels of "pity," "temper," "pauper," "drunkard," "cad," "miserable," "Emperor of Brazil," which are the free verbal flingings of some centres of not bad-hearted Arries.

No, Dover's esplanade is tolerant and good-humoured, and you may be ever such a "duffer," and a "muff," "quack," "humbug," "old soldier," and the loungers take no notice. A genial, good esplanade, and the liveliest and healthiest I know, within easy reach of London. Then either way, it leads to sea-scenery unrivalled. There is an exquisite book by a poet, about an old maid and a major, the scene of which is Dover for a great part. Any one who wants to know Dover may consult *Miss Tommy*. It is not much to read so far as length is concerned, and in my poor judgment it bears the same relation to the poet's other writings that *Silas Marner* bears to George Eliot's. They are both the quintessence of style and topic and thought which, in elaboration, have given us the written libraries of each. To the confirmed long-shorer, therefore, I should say read together *Miss Tommy*, and *Silas Marner*. I have, however, nearly exhausted my space, and said nothing of Dover. With a more liberal allowance of columns I should have traced the whole valley of the Dour, but *au revoir* in the meantime. Dover will keep.

A WOMAN.

SIMPLE, and with a light of girlish eyes
Above the serious lips of womanhood ;
Too much a little weary to be wise
Save through the stress of suffering flesh and
blood ;
Frank, bright and blithe, and singing song for song
Against the rapturous happy, she can keep,
Through the night-watches, when the hours are
long,
Sad eyes too full of sympathy to weep.
She can be swift in service, sweet in speech,
Content in silence, and in all things true;
Not clamorous after joys when out of reach,
Not under sorrow, ever old and new.
No saint, nor set apart for prayer or praise,
She makes our dull Earth brighter all her days.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

LUTCHINA;
OR, THE BLUE LAKE.

BY A. POCOLLINGTON.

—
PART I.—continued.

CHAPTER V.

DIAMONDS AND TEARS.

TWO years slipped away, and one sunny-hued evening they returned.

The household at Wolfthurn greatly admired their young mistress, and wondered where the Herr had met with her. Presently they thought it must have been in some gay part of the world, for she grew a little sad-eyed in her mountain home, even moped a little. But as for the Baron, he was ten years younger! In truth he no longer talked of stiff knees or lumbago, but walked erect as a dart, and seemed to have recovered much of his old energy and spirit. He was very proud of his young wife, and seemed never happy without her.

The Baroness, indeed, was a very different person to the pale maiden who had sat beside her husband in the travelling-carriage. She seemed to have caught some of the Baron's stateliness, and she had grown in height and learning. Her blue eyes shone with intelligence, for she had learnt much in these two years, doing all she could to please the kind old man who had soothed her father's last days. For the miller had died not many months after his daughter's marriage, and Matthias wrote that it was in peace and comfort. So she went to school again to please the Baron, and he studied with her, and delighted in wakening the dormant faculties of her mind. When he thought she knew enough, he brought her home. She had learnt amongst other things to love such beautiful objects as those with which during long patient years, the Baron had crowded his Schloss, and he led her about like a child, telling the story of this statue, of that volume, till Lutchina began to know them by heart. Lutchina had inquired for his stepson "Does he know we are married?" she asked. "Will he be friends with me?"

"Friends?" the Baron had repeated, laughing. "Melchior never quarrels with a pretty face—I only hope I may not grow jealous! Yes, child, he knows I have married a talented and beautiful wife. If he does not like it, it is his fault for leaving me so lonely. Melchior's visits are few and far between. Years sometimes pass before we meet. I have seen nothing of him for four years, as it is."

Lutchina said no more, but turned a little white. That same day the Baron led her into his picture gallery; he loved to show her his treasures himself, and she would not venture amongst them without him. But Jossi came to fetch him on business while they were scarce through the doorway, and the Baron bade his wife amuse herself till he returned. So Lutchina paced slowly along and looked into the faces of pensive Madonnas, of dead and bygone lords and ladies of Wolfthurn and others, pausing a little while in mute admiration, mingled with an indefinable dread, as she

always did before the picture of the Baron's first wife, and sinking with a muffled cry on the velvet couch that faced a small portrait on the wall a little further on. She seemed once more to stand on the bridge over the Lutchina, to hear thunder muttering in the distance, to feel a passionate kiss on her lips, and ringing in her ears the masterful "*Mine! mine!*" For this was the portrait of the stranger artist, whose name none had known when he turned from the mill; but to whom, with horror unspeakable, Lutchina felt she could now give a name.

The portrait was, indeed, somewhat fancifully treated; with the short cloak and collar of Flemish lace, it looked to belong to a bygone age; but it needed not the Baron to inform Lutchina, as he came in softly and stooped over her shoulder, that it represented his stepson, Melchior von Wolfthurn as he was called. "He is a handsome fellow," continued the Baron, noting nothing of his young wife's trouble, "and a clever artist. He painted that portrait himself. When he deigns to honour us with a visit he shall paint yours."

"Ah, no!" said Lutchina, shuddering.

"But yes!" said the Baron, kissing her.

Then he began to relate to her the histories of his pictures, and Lutchina walked beside him and listened mutely, and the dark eyes of Melchior's portrait—as such eyes will—seemed to follow her everywhere, and wherever she looked his smile—half-disdainful, wholly sweet—met her view.

After that Lutchina was seldom to be found in the picture gallery.

"I like your statues best," she said to her husband; and he was no wise displeased, for he loved them the best himself.

It was one evening, not so many days later, when Lutchina met Count Melchior once again in the flesh. After four years' absence he walked into the Schloss without word or sign, as he was in the habit of doing. The Baron was not in the way at first, but Lutchina was. Dusty and travel-stained in his loose artist attire, he went towards the chamber that was always left ready for him, and came upon Lutchina watching for her husband from a gallery window. She was dressed in red velvet, diamonds glittered on her hair and throat, for the Baron loved to frame her beauty in a rich setting, and she obeyed him like a child.

There was a deathlike silence for a moment as they confronted one another. Lutchina turned pale, and her throat grew so parched she could not utter a word; but two spots of crimson burned on the Count's swarthy cheeks, and his eyes flashed fire. She looked at him piteously.

"Allow me to congratulate you," he said, in sweet low tones that were yet full of irony. "I had no thought when I returned that this honour was in store for me. I passed by the mill this evening"—he paused and smiled upon her—"but not even Matthias was there to break the news to me."

Then, smiling still, he raised her hand to his lips, and at once turned his back on her, as if diamonds, red velvet, and all, she were a thing of naught.

Presently he met the Baron, who came in from the mountains with a healthy glow on his cheeks and his eyes sparkling like a young man's.

"Melchior!" he cried. Then he wrung his

stepson's hand, and asked shyly, "Have you seen her?"

"I have seen Lutchina Graf, the miller's daughter," answered the Count.

"You have seen my wife, the Baroness!" retorted the old man, stung as it were by the tone of smothered contempt in his stepson's voice; and a cloud no bigger than a hand seemed to creep between the two men. But the Baron was pleased to see Melchior again, and soon brushed the shadow aside. At supper they both talked and laughed cheerfully together, but Lutchina sat silent, and felt as if her diamond necklace choked her.

She left the room before the others, and in passing out Melchior bowed to her as if she had been a duchess. His cold, proud bearing chilled and tormented her.

"I trusted him—he should have come!" she murmured, and laid her head on her arms in the wide embrasure of a window and wept wildly.

The Baron had been out in the air all day, and the wine made him drowsy; seeing which, Melchior left him and strolled idly into the great library where Lutchina sat. Outside, a golden moon was rising above the mist, and Lutchina's head was turned that way. A little table with work upon it stood beside her, but her thoughts alone seemed busy. The light of a wax taper shone on something other than the jewels that glittered on her fingers; the Count saw the marks of tears, and smiled within himself, but he said a cruel thing—

"Black bread and goat's milk are not so pleasant to the taste as diamonds and a Schloss. You have done well, Baroness."

Lutchina's face flushed at the taunt, her mouth quivered, but she asked proudly, "Have you come here, then, to mock me?"

He was standing, graceful as a statue, against the wall before her, his arms behind his head after a fashion he was given to, and could gaze down upon her very comfortably.

"No," he laughed softly, "we are to be friends."

Her eyes sank before his masterful ones; the mist seemed to creep in at the window and make her shiver; she answered nothing.

"You soon grew tired of waiting for me," he continued presently.

"The past is dead—let us bury it," said Lutchina in a low tone.

The man gazing at her laughed.

"Poor little soul!" he murmured. "Lutchina, Baroness von Wolfthurn, one can forgive, but one can never forget in this world. Do you remember the day we met on the bridge—met and kissed?"

"Hush!" implored Lutchina, pale with emotion.

"We met and kissed," continued the Count calmly. "I called you mine then; well, you are mine now."

"How dare you! Leave me, leave me!" cried the Baroness, rising, with a wild alarm in her eyes, as her husband entered.

The Count turned aside with his low, mocking laugh, and the Baron approached his wife.

"Child, you are cold!" he said tenderly, and led her away to his study, a place he loved, and where a fire always burned. "Come and join us, Melchior!" he called to his son.

But the latter only laughed, and answered—

"I am going to the dogs," and went out whistling.

Lutchina seemed to cling a little to her husband that night. She put her hand into his like a frightened child, and said presently, as they sat side by side before the fire.

"Rudolf, take me with you on the mountains to-morrow."

The Baron shook his head.

"What? And spoil that creamy complexion?" he asked, stroking her soft cheek.

Lutchina sighed; there was almost a sob in her voice as she pleaded earnestly—

"Oh, but you do not know how I love the mountains! It does one good to be upon them—and see! I have not plucked a gentian for two years."

"Is it that you feel lonesome in this great Schloss when I am away?" returned the Baron. "Well, child, Melchior cares not for hunting, and will be very kind to thee."

And Lutchina said no more; but the next day, when the Count strolled about to look for her, he was told she had gone with her husband through the forest paths and had not yet returned. Melchior strode towards the Blue Lake; she will be there, he thought.

But Lutchina, when she quitted the Baron, had felt her heart sink within her. She was torn with conflicting emotions, and knew not where to turn for peace. At length, all insensibly, she found herself approaching the old mill, as though she still remembered that in her childish days all her troubles had been carried to Matthias. Matthias could no longer help her, it was true, but there was a quiet, a patience about the man that stole into the heart unawares and strengthened it. Her heart was water now—if only it might turn to ice. She prayed thus as, shuddering, she passed the little bridge where, on her marriage night, two years ago, she had lingered for the last time, throwing up appealing arms to the starlit sky, and calling upon him who would not come.

"He was but playing with me, and I should hate him," she said to herself. And then her thoughts grew choked, for the memory of her bright girlhood rose before her, and there in the old mill garden stood Matthias, nailing her roses about the porch. Matthias owned the mill now, and did well by it, they said. It was still a mystery that her father had not done so.

Lutchina lingered till the roses were fastened up, and then, when Matthias went to the gate and began to work at its lock, she moved to meet him. He did not see her till she called his name; then he looked up, and his patient, brown face clouded. Lutchina held out a hand to him, but he did not seem to see it; he raised his cap with a bow, and said gravely—

"Good morning, Frau Baronin."

And then he stood bare-headed and looked at her confusedly, for this was not Lutchina at all, but a stately, beautiful lady, clad in white like a princess, and what should a princess have to say to a miller? He saw that she was troubled, but did not gather that his proud, simple greeting had struck her like a blow.

"I thought I would like to see the old place once more," she murmured.

"Certainly, Baroness."

"And I would have come to see you before, only I cannot get away always when I would."

Lutchina spoke quite humbly, as if she were a child again whom Matthias had scolded, but he remained silent. Between a princess and a miller there is a gulf difficult to bridge, and he knew it if she did not.

"I see my roses are doing well," she said presently, and looking wistfully into the man's quiet face. Why would he not speak to her as in the old times, this grave Matthias?

"Yes, the weather suits them—I will gather you some."

And he plucked her a bunch and laid them in her hand.

"There are many roses in the Schloss garden," said Lutchina softly, "but none that I love so well as these."

And she buried her face in the fragrant blossoms so that he should not note the tears in her eyes.

Neither did he. His thoughts had wandered back to that morning, long years since, when he had last plucked a rose for the miller's beautiful daughter, and at nightfall seen it washed to his feet, a drowned and crumpled thing. How she had smiled upon him that day as she took it from his hand; his breast how it had heaved with tumultuous happiness. And now? Well, had she been drowned herself she could not be farther from him. And yet pity mingled with the sternness on the miller's face as he thought of that scene on the bridge. But Lutchina saw the sternness only, and drew back hurt and proud.

"He does not choose to be friends with me," she thought, and she bowed her head and wished him good day, and gathering her rich robe about her moved away; this time without offering her hand.

Matthias, bareheaded, stood and watched her.

"God guard thee, Lutchina," he sighed.

Yet he hoped she would not come again, for he felt he could do no good work that day.

But he need not have feared. The Baroness did not visit the old mill in this way again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROSES.

The Baron had been right when he had said to his wife—

"Melchior cares not for hunting; he will be very kind to thee."

Count Melchior could shoot with as straight an aim as his father, but he had not his love for the pursuit, and to all appearance he was kind to Lutchina. His father was greatly pleased, and the shadow that had crept between them seemed to pass entirely away.

The Count was very courteous to the beautiful Baroness. Yet he loved, as she sat at the foot of her husband's table, to fix his gaze on her till her face grew pale and red by turns, to see her eyes fill with a mist of hot, shamed tears, or her mouth, in its vain endeavour to curve haughtily, droop instead with a quiver. He would note these things with a quiet smile, and be more respectful to her than ever. There was no escape from his attentions, the less that they were unobtrusively offered, but at times through that

summer a wild longing would possess Lutchina to thrust him forth from the Schloss altogether. But she could not do it. She could not sow dissension between the two men. Melchior had a right to be there, and she—well, she must bear it. She would repeat this resolve to herself every day, and every day at some time or other Melchior's soft eye would rest on hers like an evil spell, till her very will turned to water and her proud spirit dissolved. Life, honeyed as it looked, grew bitter in its grim reality.

"If I might but lie on thy cold breast and die!" she would murmur as nightly her eyes wandered to the snow-mountain glistening in the moonlight.

But one day she went out into her gardens, feeling stronger of heart. The summer had merged into autumn, and with the first fall of snow Melchior would depart as usual. The thought comforted her as she busied herself over her roses, and it was with a smile, bright almost as of old, that she glanced round to greet, as she supposed, her husband, when a step on the gravel broke the silence.

But it was not the Baron; it was his son.

"I saw you had left the Schloss without a basket, and I have brought you one. Your hands cannot hold so many roses," said Melchior calmly.

"I did not wish for a basket," returned the Baroness, moving at once towards the house, for she hated to be alone with him.

"Well, we will not quarrel about it," laughed he softly, and throwing the basket to one side. "Let me hold those flowers for you; it will not be for the first time," he added.

Lutchina's heart beat quickly, but with a gesture of some pride she held her roses for him to take.

"Why do you hate me, Lutchina?" he asked, his dark eyes gleaming in her face.

Stung to the quick, she could have replied, "And you, why do you torment me?" But she held her peace and only quickened her pace, for the gardens were lonely and far from the Schloss.

"Though you are the Baron's wife, I have a right to your pity," continued Melchior in his sweet, melancholy voice. "You might have waited for me, Lutchina."

Lutchina looked at him with a weary anger in her eyes.

"Wait? I waited for you, Melchior von Wolfthurn, till I knew you were no longer true. Two summers went by, yet you came not, nor so much as a word from you. My father was at death's door, and your very name unknown to us; not so ours to you."

"I was but trusting thee, Lutchina."

And whether he lied or not, Lutchina could not tell.

She made him no answer, but hurried forward, glad when the turrets of the Schloss came in view; and Melchior paced moodily beside her. When they reached the Schloss door he thrust the flowers back into her hands, and crushed these within his own strong grasp.

"Thou wouldest spurn me, Lutchina, but thou canst not!" he laughed softly. "Go now to the old man—old he is—and I can wait."

The roses were scattered right and left, and Lutchina fled from him, trembling.

(To be continued.)

A TREE IN THE CITY.

By E. M. THOMPSON.

IT was a relic of the green country, this lonely elm, that stood sentinel at the corner of a busy and dingy City street in London. It braved all weathers, meekly fluttering its leaves beneath the sky, it was steadily trying to reach year by year. The sky was far away, with all its stars, and mists, and sun-gleams, but the elm, having one object in view, grew up straight, and tall, and beautiful, in unswerving fidelity to that aim of its life.

Of course it could not know, as it followed the dictation of its instincts, that old Mr. Sowerby in his darkened office below, was not regarding it with favour or even civility; it flourished in spite of his maledictions, spreading out its branches as widely as it could, and gaily tapping at the window of the gloomy little room under Mr. Sowerby's, tapping to call Hetty Blair to look at it as soon as she was awake in the morning, and whispering to her all day. Hetty had made friends with the elm when her aunt, the resident care-taker of the premises, brought her to live with her some years ago. Hetty was an orphan, and crippled by an accident to the extent of being very helpless and feeble.

Aunt Wooster was ancient and deaf, and not very good-tempered, perhaps because she had been a disappointed woman all her life. She had always set her mind upon something more difficult of attainment than aught she could possess herself of with industry; she wanted quite out-of-the-way things, and turned crabbed when she could not get them. Her best qualities certainly did not lie upon the surface, and many people were rude enough not to perceive the least indication of their existence, perhaps they were hidden in the underground regions of the poor woman's nature.

Hetty was not particularly clear-sighted in this respect, though she was grateful to Aunt Wooster for the gift of a home. Where would she have gone if Aunt Wooster had not come forward when her father died? Being very shy and very delicate, the idea of a workhouse infirmary made the girl shudder; this dull room and the society of Aunt Wooster were infinitely better than such an alternative. Alas! it was a dreary life for a girl of her age; she was only twelve, and nothing ever came to brighten the weary round of hours; she saw nothing of the outer world but the elm, and her sad little heart was heavy, and her mind full of sorrowful dreams.

It was a July afternoon, sultry and unhealthy. Mr. Sowerby having permitted the weather to get the upper hand of him, did not feel amiable. The three clerks who helped him to make money, and received very small salaries themselves, were also uncomfortable; a passing water-cart had disturbed the current of their equanimity by scattering coolness that could not refresh them, and Bickers, Twitch, and Tottle heaved three fretful sighs, as they thought for a brief moment of impossible cricket-grounds, and rows in twilight down the Thames, and fish suppers in pretty river-side inns, with sanded floors and old-fashioned gables, of holidays in general, and ease and leisure, with full pockets, and no anxiety for the morrow.

"I wish," muttered Bickers, "old Mother

Wooster would have this window cleaned, and open it to let in a breath of air occasionally."

"I wish I might send the ruler through it," said Tottle *sotto voce*, "but I'd grudge the paying up."

"Ah," said Twitch, rubbing his chin, that was covered with sandy bristles; "look at the governor, one would think he had lost his fortune."

Mr. Sowerby had only lost his glasses, but they were a serious loss; he was just in the most interesting part of a document relating to the purchase of a ship for less than three-quarters her value; he was gloating over the separate items when he dropped his gold-rimmed spectacles, and could not find them again. Layers of dust were on the floor and on the moth-eaten bit of carpet, so that when he bowed his distinguished nose beneath the desk, he swallowed a mouthful of unsavoury particles, and was set sneezing, and he could not see the spectacles.

Angry and dishevelled, he sat upright and frowned at the clerks.

"This office is uncommonly dirty! Where's Mrs. Wooster?"

This being tantamount to "fetch Mrs. Wooster," Fitch stretched his long legs and called the house-keeper to come to receive sentence, and he paused for a moment in the gloom of the back stairs, to listen to a voice that was singing very softly in a room below.

"Hold your tongue, Hetty, you'll be heard in the offices," said Aunt Wooster roughly. She had no ear for music. German bands, barrel organs, and the melody of the human voice divine, meant nothing but noise, as far as she was concerned, and she didn't know "God save the Queen" from "Yankee Doodle."

"It was a song that I made about the tree, anut Dorcas, how green those under-branches are!" Hetty's speaking voice was so pathetically sweet, that the clerk waited to hear it again, and he was not a sentimental youth, but those low, tremulous tones appealed to his heart, which was kindly and warm.

"Who have you got down there in the coal-hole, Mrs. Wooster?" he asked, as that lady appeared in answer to his summons. "Some sick person?"

"My niece lives with me, to keep me from being lonesome, and she can't walk since she fell and strained her back, after a fever three years ago. I took her out of charity. She's twelve years old and fast wearing to her grave."

"Poor little thing!" said Fitch, fumbling in his pocket; "look here—give her this, will you?"

Mrs. Wooster accepted the threepenny-piece readily, and cast it into her own pouch, inquiring snappishly, "And what do Mr. Sowerby want—I was just scrubbing the passage?"

"Go and see what he wants," answered Fitch laconically, for he was not fond of the house-keeper. She was as disagreeable to him as the dust and the heat and the drudgery, all put together. It was almost a crime for a woman not to have something pleasant about her, in either character or appearance.

Mr. Sowerby scowled as Mrs. Wooster entered, —she was always meek and civil with him, and could cajole him with a well-cooked lunch; but he had eaten his chops long ago, and his present need was for his spectacles—he was helpless without them.

"Look under this desk, Mrs. Wooster, and tell me what you see!" said he in sepulchral accents. Mrs. Wooster dodged down, sniffling, and said she saw nothing.

"I see, I feel, I breathe dust, hateful dust—when was this office cleaned?"

"It was cleaned yesterday as usual, it's that there tree outside that darkens the place, it's a constant worry, sir; and when I opens the winder, why, the dust it has gathered all day is shook down on everything inside, sir."

"The tree?—humph—"

"I can't answer for nothing with such a shadow over the place, sir. I sweep up and sweep up again, and that there tree bothers me to a—"

"Well, that's easily remedied, the tree need not remain; I have a right to cut it down," said Mr. Sowerby savagely. "You may go."

Mrs. Wooster withdrew in a temper, and Fitch helped Mr. Sowerby to hunt for the missing property in every nook and cranny of the mouldering boards.

"It's strange, remarkably strange!" mumbled the discomfited gentleman, "they only fell off my nose, and they seem to be—nowhere—"

They were assuredly invisible; Twitch rose from his knees the worse for his exertions in point of attire, and his already seedy nether garments were seedier still, for that sort of dust clings.

"If the tree is in fault, it shall come down at once," said Sowerby, sitting down, very hot and irreful, and quite incapable of continuing his occupation. He could do nothing unspectacled. To think that two little shabby bits of glass could make such a difference to a clever man of business! and they were anything but rose-coloured spectacles either. They took a very prosaic view of life.

* * * * *

"I'm going to Leadenhall Market, meat will be cheap, it's so hot," said Aunt Wooster; "and you work away at that bit of lace and finish it for tomorrow; them people are in a hurry."

"I've a headache," sighed Hetty, pushing back the nimbus of thick golden hair that her relative kept short by continual docking. "I wish people wouldn't want lace in weather like this."

"You ought to be thankful you've got it to do, and that I found that Devonshire woman to teach you how to do it, so as to let you try to make up to me for some of your board."

"It's dusky, and I was copying the leaves on that small bough," said Hetty, pointing to a pretty branch that her friend, the elm, held towards her like a hand offered in greeting.

"Then you'd best make haste with them leaves, that's all I can tell you," quoth Aunt Wooster as she swung a basket on her arm and went out.

The clerks had departed long since! Hetty knew the echoes of the ancient house well, and the tread of each separate individual, though she had never seen their faces. Mr. Sowerby generally went away before his clerks; nobody knew where he lived, for he was not communicative. Hetty was astonished to hear the gruff accents of her aunt's employer in conversation with someone who must have been admitted after hours. Mr. Sowerby was staying late to-night. Hetty lay in her chair and looked into the dusky clusters of leaves, and made stories about them for herself; she was

always weaving fancies bright and fair, for the life she lived would have been wretched, unendurable, without the use of the precious gift of imagination that fortunately was the child's dowry, the birthright that no one could take from her.

It enabled Hetty to forget the present, and to be as happy as a little girl doomed to exist in such an uncongenial atmosphere could be.

She sat or lay in her dark corner from year's end to year's end—Aunt Wooster taking no further trouble about her, and bringing no doctor to discover if there might ever be a cure for her helplessness. Summer and winter were only signified to Hetty by the changes of temperature, and by the messages sent her from the seasons by her beloved tree. In winter she watched the tracery of the boughs, and when spring came and the tiny brown buds made knots on them—knots that swelled and burst into an exquisite green,—quite unexpectedly one day, when she was counting them, she was in breathless delight, and when later on the leaves spread open, and cast graceful shadows, and the breeze played with them, she was happier still, saying to herself gaily—

"That is a wood, and beyond it is the wild, beautiful country, with birds and streams, and wonderful places that I shall walk in and love by-and-by—places where there is shade and sunshine, and moss, and daisies like those my father brought me once. Ah! Aunt Wooster doesn't guess where I go when I leave my wood! The other side of my tree is only the street to her; I would rather be myself than Aunt Wooster!"

As Hetty looked at her tree to-night, she pitied it, because the dust of the day and the heat of the sun had made the leaves droop heavily; a shower was necessary to its comfort sometimes, and therefore she wished it would rain, not on Mrs. Wooster's bonnet, of course, but when that lady returned from her marketing.

Presently Hetty became aware of voices in the street just outside the door, and some one was irreverently poking and probing the heart of the elm with a long pole.

"What a shame!" cried Hetty, fired with indignation. "Mr. Sowerby ought to be told; if I could only walk up the stairs, I could tell him. I can crawl up, but if aunt comes home she will be very angry. What shall I do? Oh, my dear tree!"

On sundry occasions, when left by herself, Hetty had actually managed to make her way up into the hall, to see what it was like. The journey was a painful progress on her hands and knees, for she could not stand upright; but it had given her much pleasure, and when, by slow degrees, she got back into her corner, she felt as if she had done something great, and when she had seen the front door and the two office doors on that floor, and pictured old Mr. Sowerby and the three clerks to her own satisfaction. Mr. Sowerby thus portrayed was a fat and rosy gentleman, like a kind doctor she remembered in the long ago; and the clerks were three rosy boys, who were full of fun and fresh from school. The upper hall was very dusty though, and the boards were decaying.

A merciless thrust into the tree broke off a fine branch. Hetty heard the loud voices again, and regular strokes as with a hatchet.

"It had better be done at once!" said Mr. Sowerby's unmusical tones; "don't leave it till

to-morrow. The street is narrow and it might block the way."

What could he mean, and why were these strokes continuing? As Hetty gazed in amazement, a sort of shudder or thrill seemed to run through the elm, and another fine branch was broken; if this went on, the enchanted wood must be destroyed soon.

"That is very strange," said Hetty in vague alarm. "I must go up and see what it is. It is quite dreadful."

She crept along as well as she could, and groped her way to the stairs; they were steep and dangerous, and she was afraid she could not climb them fast enough. Her heart was beating wildly, and she was tongue-tied with trepidation, for there was a tall, dark figure stationed at the open door when she reached the passage.

"The tree, the tree!" gasped Hetty at last, but her cry was unheard.

"Are you sure you understand what you are doing?" demanded Mr. Sowerby from the door; and a rougher voice replied, "Yes, sir; it ain't the first tree I've chopped."

"And you will not have assistance?"

"They must be doing something wicked!" said Hetty, exerting herself desperately.

As she crept by the office door she saw something that glittered sticking out of a crevice near the threshold, and with a tug drew a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles from a rat-hole, which the rats had allowed to remain where they fell from their owner's hand that afternoon, perhaps on account of their not being nourishing food.

Somebody touched Mr. Sowerby's boot, and startled him so that he jumped, and on turning round beheld a queer little creature on the floor. Hetty was soiled after her journey; her print frock torn and worn, her face covered with dust and cobwebs, and she was very small of her age. She held out one dirty little hand towards the old gentleman, who ejaculated in disgust and dismay—

"Eh! What's this? Who is this? How did you get in from the street, child? I'll have no beggars in here. I'll—I'll give you up to a policeman."

He could not see very clearly without his glasses, but he thought he had secured a professional plunderer, a tiny Bohemian taught to thieve from the cradle.

"Get up, get up," he said angrily.

"Oh, but I cannot—I—"

The process of ejection is very simple when the ejected person is of no particular size and incapable of resistance. Mr. Sowerby sternly bent his shaggy brows and, with a grim smile on his thin lips, firmly grasped Hetty by her draperies and landed her outside on the steps, and not tenderly either; she uttered a low cry of pain, and for the first time he noticed that she was holding his spectacles, as she lay gazing upwards with fascinated eyes into the fluttering mass of green, for the elm was gradually yielding to vigorous strokes, trembling at every blow.

"Oh, my tree; my tree!" wailed Hetty.

"What do you mean, child, where did you get—" exclaimed Mr. Sowerby, making for his spectacles with a rush. "Where did you find—no, you stole them—you must have stolen them! Where are the police?—boy, call the police."

The members of the force were, however, not within sight; in fact, they were relaxing their discipline over the tea-pot in privacy and there was no one to take anybody up.

Terrified and bewildered, Hetty silently let the cross old gentleman grab at her arm and shake her, but she changed the spectacles into her left hand.

"Aunt Wooster said that," she began, "that Mr. Sowerby had lost them. I'll keep them for him."

"I am Mr. Sowerby."

Hetty did not believe it; the Mr. Sowerby in her imaginary mental portrait gallery had not spoken so, had not frowned upon her—and yet this individual used Mr. Sowerby's tones in speaking, which was a decided liberty if they were not his personal property. The elm was Mr. Sowerby's property too, and how could any one dare to injure the tree that was the single spot of brightness in the dull old street. Surely Mr. Sowerby must love the tree—this old gentleman must be an impostor

"It's not nice to be shaken," said Hetty, determined but out of breath; "you are unkind; Mr. Sowerby wouldn't do that, I'm sure he wouldn't, so I won't give you his spectacles."

"Won't?—you impudent little monk——"

"Look, look, you'll be killed!" shrieked the child suddenly, and she flung the glasses with all the strength of her weak arm on the pavement.

Mr. Sowerby, exasperated beyond measure, shook her from him and bounded towards the gutter, with all the agility of his by-gone youth—the wretched little thief—the spectacles were broken by their fall. But the small crowd that had gathered to watch the fun, as crowds in London do in a few minutes, raised a shout and there was a crash—a rumbling sound, "Look out master."

The elm had fallen prone at an unexpected moment; it blocked up the doorway, the top boughs had smashed Mr. Sowerby's office windows, its bulk crashed down his railings, and even his august person was pushed ignominiously into the middle of the narrow street. The unskilful woodsman gazed upon the ruin he had wrought in half a mind to flee before his employer recovered his footing as well as his self-possession.

"Who'd known it 'ud have fallen that way!" he exclaimed, gaping at his handiwork with open mouth, and clapping his hat still further back on his bullet head. "And I'm that 'ot."

"Where's the child—the little girl?" cried Mr. Sowerby, excitedly struggling with a bough; "the child was on the steps."

"Then she must ha' bin killed. Didn't I holler out for every one to hear—I did," granted the man stolidly.

At this juncture the boy, who had gone in search of a policeman, reappeared with one who had finished his tea, and was ready for work.

"Hallo!" said this functionary, sharply; "who has cut down the elm in that fashion? Look at the windows; look at the door. By whose orders?"

"By mine. I had the right," began Mr. Sowerby; "but—"

"Stop, sir; you must prove your right. How has it come to be your right? and it certainly wasn't your right to cut it down like that; look were it lies, and look at the damage."

The policeman had no dislike to trees, you see. They are comfortable things to stand under sometimes, they are landmarks for a beat, and they remind one of country days and courting. The policeman looked almost sentimental for a second, but the alarm depicted in Mr. Sowerby's countenance soon showed him that something was wrong.

"Look here," gasped the gentleman in a sort of subdued horror; "look here, there was a child I tell you—under—under—"

"Do you mean to say that there's anybody under the tree? that there tree?"

Mr. Sowerby made no answer; he only began to tear the branches vehemently; he must find the child or lose his senses. In a brief moment, ere he blunderingly took heed of Hetty's sudden warning cry, he had seen her face close in all its fragile loveliness, her eyes had met his, and their innocent sweetness startled him like a remembrance of his dead youth.

"Mr. Sowerby," said the policeman, "you will be summoned for this, sir. You should have had it done properly; made it safe for your neighbours."

"Hang my neighbours! Can't you help, without chattering?"

They tore at the hapless tree savagely; the street was strewn with leaves, as if in readiness for some festival of summer, and presently they saw the object of their search lying in a hollow of greenery; the arching boughs had made a bower for her, and when they raised the trunk and were able to reach her, she seemed to be in a deep sleep, for the transparent lids shrouded her violet eyes, and there was a strange look of peace on her face.

"Lod a mercy!" cried Aunt Wooster, hurrying up. "What's happened? It can't be—it can't be that my little niece has got killed! She must have come up to see what was doing to the tree; that's how it was, she was so fond of it."

But Mr. Sowerby put her aside, and knelt down by Hetty.

"Is she dead?" he muttered hoarsely, and he touched her with hands that trembled. "It is my doing if she is. I will take her to the surgery yonder."

"Dear sir, how good you are! It was *her* fault," snivelled Mrs. Wooster, who was perhaps a little glad to be relieved of the care of a helpless relative. "It was Providence that done it, if she's taken—oh!"

"Woman, stand back. Let the ways of Providence alone. What providence are you to anybody?"

Mrs. Wooster stared; she was not used to such chiding.

But testy Mr. Sowerby lifted Hetty with the utmost tenderness. The child's head with its nimbus of golden hair drooped on his shoulder; one thin arm dropped as if it were injured badly, but the other rested on his neck as if—oh joy!—there was life in it.

Then Hetty stirred, opened her eyes, and murmured dreamily something that no one understood. It was about "the other side of her wood;" then she recognized the withered countenance of her bearer.

"Please don't hurt me," she said; "please where am I going?"

"Thank God I—I have not caused her death!" cried Mr. Sowerby. "She is injured though, but

she may be cured. My child, you need not fear me."

The last thing that Hetty heard that night when she was lying in her hospital bed sent her into a happy sleep in spite of the pain she was in.

"Little girl—dear little girl," said old Mr. Sowerby, "you saved my life to-day, and I shall carry you away as soon as you are well enough to my home in Kent to be my daughter, my comfort. You will find twenty trees for the tree you have lost, and roses and everything you think pretty."

Hetty slept and dreamt of his words, and soon—very soon—she really saw the other side of her tree.

Old Mr. Sowerby became amiable; he was humanized by the natural process of having something to love, and his three clerks grew quite fond of him.

Hetty was a fairy gift, you know, and so are many unvalued things when you understand them; but the narrow city street will never be gladdened with another tree like Hetty's elm. Its greenness and beauty are a tradition of the past, but it did not die in vain.

Aunt Wooster resides in some almshouse now, and quarrels with the charity that supports her; but she could not be happy unless she had something to grumble at.

IN SUMMER-TIME.

AGAIN in the hedgerows, heavy
With blossom, trail and twine
Woodbine and hop and bramble,
Dog-rose and eglantine.

Again on the hill-side sparkle
The delicate white flowers
And ruddy leaves of the sun-dew:
Again the golden hours

Of Summer's eloquent silence
Make it a joy to be;
And gleam and glory and glamour
Are mantling forest and lea.

But, why—when coppice and moorland
And lane and meadow grew gay
With welcome to Summer, resuming
Its blithe, beneficent sway—

Among all glad things returning,
Fairer than they, in the train
Of radiant, blossom-prankt Summer,
Came not to greet me again

In the old familiar fashion,
At the ancient trysting-place,
A vision of girlish beauty—
The shy, sweet, winsome face

That a year since beamed upon me,
Making these dreamful bowers
Love's Pleassance, yet drooped and faded
I' the Autumn with the flowers?

JOHN F. ROLPH.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

BY EDWIN WHELTON.

MY husband's death seemed to upset everything. Our pretty little villa became painful to me. Association was not tender—rather was it saddening. Every day and every hour of a day I was too painfully reminded of our brief spell of happiness, of his departure for aye. My sister Cora came to live with me, and she did her best to cheer me; but at times Cora was very much out of sorts. She was delicate. Accustomed to country air, London disagreed with her, the roses vanished out of her cheeks, and her spirits often enough were lower than mine. She put a brave face on matters, but I could see when her gaiety was forced. Alfred (Alfred was Cora's lover) was anxious about her. Although he held an appointment in a London hospital, and was competent enough to be accepted as an authority, he insisted upon having an "opinion." We got it: substantially what Alfred had declared. Cora needed change of air. The man of age and experience adding, "Bracing. Nothing wrong, my dear madam, nothing; her lungs are sound as a roach."

Alfred and Cora were to marry as soon as Alfred could see his way to a country practice. I could have helped him, but Alfred was so abominably independent. I could not see why they could not marry in his present position. But I kept my counsel; in Cora's present state of health perhaps it was wisdom deferring their union.

There was nothing to keep me in town; indeed, it would be advantageous to live in the country. Besides the fresh air, one gets fresh butter, new-laid eggs, milk from the cow. And what a glorious thing to grow one's own vegetables, and pluck and eat fruit ripe on tree and bush. Then, without being straitened in means, I had not so much to play with as when poor dear Joe was alive. He was but a junior partner, and I had to submit to be bought out. In fact, he had as good as willed it so. There is no telling what may happen. In these ticklish times, a "going concern" may have to wind up, and Joe did not like one of the partners. What was his due and mine, invested securely, if it brought in a diminished income, left no room for anxiety or nervous forecasting.

"Well, Selina, what is your idea?" Alfred asked, after I told him what Dr. Magnus had said.

"We must look out for a house, or get you to do that for us."

"Then I have anticipated your thought as well as old Magnus's fiat. I have run my eye through two or three papers, and have brought the *Telegraph*. There's a country house advertised that will suit you. You've often romanced about living in an antiquated old place. Here we are."

Alfred read aloud the advertisement—

"An Ancient Stone Residence, near the Sea, To Let for a Year or Term of Years. Partly furnished; the owner abroad. Rent secondary to a suitable tenant. Bails near. Orchard and paddock if required.—Apply to Mr. Fortescue, Barton-upon-Humber."

"Rent secondary! that surely means something would be given annually to an approved tenant," romanced Alfred.

"But we ought to see the place before we take it," said I.

"Had I better write to Mr. Fortyscrew now?"

"How would it be for you to run down and spy out the land?"

"Can Alfred get a day?" put in Cora questioningly.

"Two, you mean, dear," said Alfred. "I must ask for two. I might not work the journey in one, if trains run awkwardly. I can get leave, I've relieved everybody."

The next morning we borrowed a *Bradshaw*, and when Alfred came in, we had his trains jotted down. If he started with the night mail, he would accomplish the distance, have ample time to reconnoitre, and be back the following night.

When Alfred returned, he painted the house in roseate hues. It stood by itself, but was within a measurable distance of the town. Facing the Humber, the town of Hull could be seen; also a village directly opposite us. For company, there would be the procession of sail on the estuary, and the perpetual railway trains on the other bank.

"I won't call the agent Fortyscrew again," said Alfred, with compunction, "he is a decent sort of man. He seemed wishful to meet me. He only asked £25 rent; when I asked him if he did not think £20 would be sufficient he closed at once. There is another thing, Selina. A cottage is near, an old woman lives in it, a kind of caretaker. She proffered to help you in any way."

"We shall have to get the furniture packed then, and I shall have to let the villa."

"I wouldn't hurry about either," demurred Alfred. "The house is partly furnished. I think you might, with a few things, make shift for a night or two. I certainly told him he might have the agreement ready, but I think you ought to look over the house yourself."

How I did wish we had packed when we saw the house. It really was delightful. It might be a little fusty, but occupation would remedy that. My experience of antiquated houses was confined to books. Cora's eyes brightened. Staircase and corridors were all wainscotted, some old portraits hanging on the walls. But in most of the rooms, the owners had so far bent to modern ideas as to have them canvassed and papered. It seemed a species of Vandalism to me. There was one bedroom that had not been modernized, and without saying anything just then, I decided upon occupying it. As I came out upon the staircase, I looked again at one of the old portraits; the face had a peculiar attraction for me. There was hardness in it, a peculiar gleam in the eyes—vindictive, suspicious, if not jealous. One hand grasped a riding-whip as if with unnecessary tightness. The old caretaker, I noticed, seemed to edge away from the portrait. Alfred had said that the old lady was agreeable, but we thought her extremely self-contained; she would give little more than "yes" or "no" to our questions. Maria, one of our maids whom we had brought down with us, declared the old woman boorish; but we read Maria a lecture; we told her we hoped she would not be disagreeable, for we wished to keep on good terms with our one neighbour.

Alfred had not overrated the views; the room I had pitched upon commanded the estuary. The view was blocked a little at one point, by a kind of

triangular copse: it seemed a remnant of the old time when Nature ran wild. There was a growth of furze and other undergrowth almost to the water's edge. A happy thought occurred to us—bathing. We hurried down to the water and found the shore shingly, and actually a hut, as if placed there for our convenience.

When we returned to the house I sent for a carpenter. We had brought with us a couple of beds and other sundries. The man had not been in the house ten minutes when Maria, with a white face, rushed in upon us.

"If you please 'm, the house is haunted!"

"Such nonsense," cried I, exasperated, "who has been telling you such a ridiculous tale."

"The carpenter, ma'am. He ought to know."

"He ought to know better than to frighten a credulous girl, silly man."

Maria had barely gone, when the old lady appeared.

"Are you going to sleep in the panelled room, ma'am?"

"Of course we are, it is by far the pleasantest room in the house."

"I wouldn't sleep in that room, ma'am."

"Why?" I asked, a little irritably.

"I wouldn't, ma'am."

"That is no answer. Do you say it is haunted?"

"No, ma'am, but folks reckon there's summuts."

"Summuts," sneered I, "why this corner of England is full of superstition."

"Perhaps we had better choose another room," suggested Cora, when the old lady was gone. I saw that Cora was nervous.

"Pooh, are you frightened, Cora? You are as foolish as they. Well, you may sleep in Maria's room to-night, and I will sleep there alone."

"No, I shall sleep where you sleep, dear," said Cora strenuously, forcing herself to be courageous.

"To think that in this enlightened century there should be people who believe in ghosts!" laughed I in derision.

However, Maria was so frightened by the foolish carpenter's assertion, she declared that she dare not sleep in any room in the house, unless she had some one for company. In the end we had to let her go to the cottage, and brave the night by ourselves.

A tarnished mirror over the fireplace was the only wall adornment our bedroom had. When one looked in it the image was somewhat indistinct; Cora started at her own reflection. I laughed at her nervousness, and succeeded, as I thought, in reassuring her.

I must say I felt the room a little eerie when, awake, I heard only Cora's breathing. I never felt more sleepless in my life. I wished I had brought both maids down, so that Maria would have had no excuse, but I felt bound to leave one behind, and Alfred had kindly proffered to sleep in the house until we decided definitely. Eleven o'clock!—our little timepiece indicated the hour with a metallic chink. How puny it sounded here. I wished I could go to sleep. But in a strange house, anywhere, my first night is a wakeful one. I must have got into a doze when a violent stroke upon the door, as if given with a hunting-whip, brought me back to complete consciousness. It had a frightful sound in my ear, and, I must confess, terrified me. It awoke Cora, I felt her grasp me convulsively. Before I could

speak or scream, there came in quick succession a second and third stroke. I lay bathed in perspiration, my head aching almost with the fright: Cora, I could feel, shaking as with the ague.

"Don't scream!" I managed to whisper to Cora, though never in my life was I nearer shrieking myself.

Involuntarily I sat up. It was moonlight, and there was no blind to the window, or it had not been drawn down. Cora clutched me, and pointed to the wall. *There was an undefined luminous shape!*

"Look! look!" gasped Cora.

I obeyed her gesture. The *something* was reflected in the mirror. I closed my eyes and opened them again. My heart stood still. It was no optical delusion. My eyes might be strained, partly with fright, but I was sure that my imagination was playing me no trick. I fell back, then ventured to look again as I lay. The shape disappeared gradually, the wall resuming its normal appearance. Cora had covered her face with the bedclothes.

"Don't be frightened, dear, it is a shameful trick. Some one may have a reason for keeping the house empty." I could not think so, but I wished to inspire Cora with courage. "We will telegraph to Alfred. He will come down and get at the mystery."

Alfred derided the supernatural. Sometimes I had been inclined to think he went too far. I am not straitlaced, but still one shrinks a little when matters are ridiculed which from childhood we have been taught to shelve, or regard with a feeling akin to awe. But in spite of Alfred's materialistic leanings and views, I had no compunction trusting Cora to him. Here he would have a fine chance of proving his theories.

After the fright, sleeping was out of the question. Cora would not be induced to uncover her face or relax her grasp. I spoke in whispers, but that alarmed her; when I essayed a word, she grasped me tighter, or there was a stifled "S-sh!" I closed my eyes, opening them at intervals, anxious for daylight. To get up, to leave the room, was what I dare not do. I dreaded the corridor in the darkness. How I wished I had left a light burning, but I had seen the moon. I dare not get up to light the candle; striking the match might bring some nameless horror upon me. I dare scarcely breathe audibly.

With what relief did I view the first streaks of light.

"Cora," said I—my calm voice surprising myself—"we can get up now, it is daylight."

"Let us go back to London by the first train," implored she. "I dare not sleep in this house another night. I should die of fright."

"I shall telegraph to Alfred. If he can't get down, we will go to a hotel at Barton or Hull. I feel sure that it is a trick. Don't mention a word to Maria, nor to the old lady. Perhaps she is in the conspiracy. She didn't wish us to occupy this room."

In my telegram I urged Alfred to come; I also begged him to wire back and let us know whether he could or could not come.

The dear fellow replied in the affirmative. I knew that he would strain every nerve.

But although I bound Cora over to secrecy, I determined to try and prevail upon the old lady

to state why she had not wished us to occupy that particular room. I pride myself upon a little tact, or ability to pump dry the deepest well. I believe I should have been good as a lawyer, forcing an unwilling witness to reveal what he wished to keep back. I left Cora with Maria, and proceeded to the cottage. After some preamble, I brought up the subject, and when I acquainted the old lady that I had heard noises, she became communicative. *The house was haunted!*

"I've slept in the house," she admitted.

"Did you never hear them?"

"I never slept in that room," said she evasively. "What were they like?"

"Like a whip, as if the lash and stock were held in the hand."

"Ah," murmured she with an assentive inclination of the head.

"You haven't slept in that room?"

"No, ma'am."

"Will you sleep in it to-night?"

"No, ma'am, not for all the money in the world," answered she with decision.

"Is there any story connected with the noises?"

"Well, yes, ma'am, there is."

"I should like to hear it. I should feel better satisfied."

To give the story in the old lady's vernacular, would be repetitive, if not tedious. I gathered it with some trouble; at times she showed a disposition to wander from her subject. I think I give it succinctly.

The estate came by marriage to the original of the portrait with the riding-whip. It was not a marriage of affection. A young heiress was constrained to marry a man much older than herself, who had an eye upon her dowry. Court influence was even brought to bear upon her. The heiress had a half-brother, an unswerving Jacobite, who had followed the king to the Court of Versailles. Allying himself with the Pretender, there was never any chance of his succeeding to his forfeited estates. He was too zealous a partisan. Eventually he was entrusted with a mission to England, there to hold secret meetings with and gather the strength and disposition of those not inimical to the Stuart cause. The Hanoverian party were apprised of his descent upon the coast, and, without making the knowledge public, a watch was set. The recusant was warned, and succeeded in escaping capture, hiding at successive houses. He had a natural desire to see his sister—a mother's children are nearer than a father's—at his sister's house he knew he could be safe for a time, the contiguity of water facilitating escape; moreover, a secret passage existed in the house, only the direct heir being entrusted with the secret of its position.

Self-contained, dreading more than disliking the man who had been forced upon her, no confidences ever passed between husband and wife. The wife's coldness probably exasperated a husband prone to suspicion and jealousy. He had always imagined that his wife had some prior attachment; the years strengthened his belief. At one time he had hung about the Court, suddenly he retired to the country, and in a way immured himself and his young wife. He was not one to wander far afield. It seemed his mission in life to watch and guard his wife. Her life became almost intolerable. Her brother's appearance, though

welcome, inspired a new fear. If she confided in her husband, her husband might betray him. Were she reticent, he gain the slightest hint, the demon of jealousy would be aroused. Some whisper that a cloaked figure had been seen in the vicinity was whispered by serving-maid to serving-man, and reached the squire's ears. He was convinced that his suspicions had not been ill-founded. Etna's fury raged in his breast. His wife had taken to shunning him, seeking the privacy of her room. Occasionally the door was locked against him. He swore to himself that he would get at the mystery. He followed her to her room; again the door was closed against him, the key turned and the bolt was shot in his hearing. In his rage he struck at the door—once, twice, thrice—with his heavy riding-whip. Then, a man of powerful strength, he took up a heavy chair and shattered the door. As the door gave way, he caught sight of something—what, was never known—and dashed into the room. When next seen his wife was a timorous idiot, and whether it was remorse or despair, or the result of an accident, his body a week later was washed ashore. But the cloaked figure was not seen to steal away, the emissary never returned to Versailles, and after a time the crazy widow also disappeared.

"And is there a secret chamber?" I asked—a "creepy" sensation at my backbone.

"I don't know, ma'am I think not. One has never been found. Part of the old house was pulled down, I've heard. I should think the family that came to it would do away with anything of the sort."

Something in the old woman's manner struck me as still evasive. I was inclined to believe that some secret cranny was yet in existence. Well, Alfred would be with us before the day was over.

He did not disappoint us, but his telegram had given us some confidence. Yet Cora would not go about the house alone. I do not think I could have prevailed upon her to visit the room in which we slept. When Alfred arrived, she rushed to meet him, and placing her hands on his shoulders, buried her head on his breast, imploring him not to desert her.

"Take me away—back to London. I cannot—I am afraid to stay in this dreadful house."

"My dear, what is wrong with it?" he asked.

I placed my finger to my lips, and he ceased to question him. I admired him for his quick apprehension and his blithe *savoir faire*.

"Why, Cora, I thought of leaving London. I have given up my appointment."

"Given it up!" I exclaimed.

Cora too was startled. She raised her eyes to look inquiringly into his. The smile about his mouth was suggestive of something good he had intended to hold in reserve.

"Directly you had gone, I had a letter from old Dr. Whaplode of Shrewsbury. My father and he were almost like brothers in their regard for each other. He thinks of giving up, and he offers me his practice. He wants nothing for goodwill, he says he is sufficiently well-to-do to dispense with that. What is more, he will give me his countenance, he will be at my elbow. It can be Whaplode and Dresden until I am assured of the run. But that is a matter yet to be decided upon. I intended getting there, and after I was ensonced, and the house ready, coming down upon you like

an avalanche. It is a quaint old town, full of timbered houses. The street we shall live in is a kind of boulevard, a double row of trees down it—beautiful in summer."

I found it difficult to get Alfred to myself. Cora seemed as if she would not be disposed of. I had to stamp my foot before I could detach her.

"One would think you were intent upon eating him," I said with a pretence of displeasure.

"Now then, Selina," said he when we were alone, "what is the grievance?"

Briefly I related our experiences of the night. Then I gave him the old woman's narrative, put, as I was priding myself, in a highly interesting manner. All I got for my pains was an indignant "Pish!" followed by a materialistic disquisition that I rebelled against utterly. Cause and effect, did clothes walk?—Bah! I could believe my ears and my eyes.

"We must go," decided I, "or we shall have Cora crazy. She was terrified."

"And were not you?"

"I was alarmed, yes, I was frightened."

"Humph! you had better go to a hotel both of you. I will stay in the house, and sleep in that room. I will have a bludgeon handy, and woe to the miscreant!"

"I wouldn't, Alfred, it is not worth while."

"It isn't? But it is. I shall explode the fallacy. I have never had a chance before. I feel in honour bound to make the attempt."

I saw that it was useless attempting to dissuade him, and decided that we too would risk another night in the house.

Cora was in great alarm when Alfred acquainted her with his decision, but his quiet and derisive laughter, if it did not wholly reassure her, quieted her. I could see that Alfred thought Cora was ashamed of her fears, and that I, after all, was the more gullible person.

Night came, and at eleven o'clock we all retired, Alfred as light-hearted as if he was already tasting the joy of the ghost's discomfiture. I had wished to remove the mirror, but Alfred insisted upon nothing being touched.

Maria had again decided not to sleep in the house. I found that the old lady had related to the girl our experiences. I told Maria that she need have no fear—Dr. Dresden was to occupy our room; but the stupid girl would listen to no reason.

"Close your eyes, Cora, and get a good night's rest," said I, as she nestled near me.

"I don't think I can sleep, I feel so anxious for Alfred."

But soon I had the satisfaction of hearing her regular breathing. I thought I would keep awake, but I dozed off. I had had no sleep the previous night, and when I miss a night's rest, I generally make up for it after. I could not have slept many minutes when I was awakened by a peculiar noise. Our room was contiguous to Alfred's, but the walls were thick. It awoke Cora.

"Listen!" whispered she, in some dread.

I strained my ears. Faintly came what sounded like measured taps. They would cease for a moment or more, then be resumed. It was a new phase of the ghost's vagaries.

"What are you going to do?" Cora asked anxiously.

"I am going to tap at Alfred's door, and ask him if he is all right."

"I dare not stay alone."

"I shall not be away a minute. You would not have any harm come to Alfred?"

"I shall go with you."

We each slipped on our dressing-gowns and encased our feet in slippers, to steal along the corridor to Alfred's door. He evidently heard us, for his door opened with such suddenness, Cora gave a little scream.

"Oh, it's you!" said Alfred a little ungraciously. I found he was disappointed.

"You may thank your stars I didn't rush at you. I thought, hearing your stealthy tread, it was some rascal stealing away."

"Have you heard the cuts at the door?" I asked.

"I heard something, I should have been stone deaf if I hadn't," growled he. "I got to the door as quickly as possible, but I was too late."

Perhaps I felt my triumph, although my teeth chattered and my chin had nervous twitchings. Alfred was disconcerted, but he was not one whit frightened.

"I think I have discovered one thing; that mirror and the moon are in conspiracy. They cause that light on the wall. It is a fancy of mine, anyway. The mirror is old, and the glass imperfect."

"Then you have seen the shape on the wall?"

"Shape!" echoed he contemptuously; "it is a reflection; maybe the trees outside have something to do with it."

"Did you hear taps?"

"Oh, I have been tapping the wainscot. Didn't that old woman hint at a hiding-place, a secret chamber? This wall is unduly thick. There seems a space between your room and mine difficult to account for. I walked round the house before it was dusk. The course of the stonework is broken into. A fissure appears to have been filled up. I have been tapping along that side."

"You were searching for a panel that sounds hollow."

"I have searched."

"And you can't find one sounding differently?"

"No," he answered glumly; "I think you had better get to bed, or you will be having colds. I was just turning in myself. I thought I would examine the room by daylight."

We could not sleep; we felt the house eerie. I had sighed all my life, that the old houses of the romances, with their secret chambers, ghosts, and subterranean passages, were either mythical, or owned by people chary of making their existence known. Here we were favoured with a vengeance. There could not be a doubt that the house boasted both ghost and secret chamber. But I decided that it was very unpleasant to live in such uncanny houses. We kept a light burning, my mind made up to leave the house the very next day. Cora and I got talking, for lying still was oppressive.

"If Alfred goes to Shrewsbury, you will go with him, I suppose?"

"I shall not go with him unless he consents to have you too," returned Cora, with quiet decision.

"My dear, he cannot marry both."

"No, no," said Cora, affronted; "how ridiculous you are, Selina. I mean, you must live with us."

"I will for a time, dear," I said, after I had had

my laugh ; "but a time will come when you will be better pleased to have the house to yourselves."

"Never!" declared Cora emphatically.

"What heavy eyes we shall have, if we get no sleep," I murmured.

Happily we were overpowered. We had decided that it would be impossible to sleep, but drowsiness overtook us both.

When we got down Alfred was awaiting us. His face did not invite questioning, so I thought I would let him speak. That is always the best way. When poor Joe was put out, I never badgered him; I let him begin his budget. If I began to question him, he was snappy directly. Alfred drank a cup of coffee, and then showed a disposition to talk.

"I've had a look round, inside and out. I should like to go into your room. If I find nothing there, I shall give it up. But I am not going to believe in ghosts for all that," he added quickly.

"It is a very incomprehensible thing," I returned.

"I feel that it only wants a clue, and then all would be clear as daylight."

"But then," I persisted, "there is finding the clue."

"Of course, you believe in the ghost," said he acidly.

"I didn't say so," I responded as tartly.

"Now, come," interposed Cora, "don't you two quarrel over it. I shall be thankful when we get away."

Alfred examined the wall in our bedroom, tapping it as he had done in his own room; but, although he was convinced that the wall was unduly thick, he had to admit himself beaten.

"You can go to Mr. Fortescue and explain to him that we have decided not to stay. If there is anything to pay—"

"Pay! I shall not pay anything. He ought to have put in the advertisement that there was the unusual accessory of spirit-rapping."

Alfred was not yet restored to good-humour. He returned from the town though in better temper.

"I have seen Mr. Fortescue. He is not half a bad fellow. He says he should never think of levying black-mail. The house, he says, is uncanny. He wishes it was blown up."

We were seated at breakfast at Shrewsbury, Cora at the head of the table—and very nicely she posed as mistress, I proudly assert—Alfred hidden behind a morning paper; when suddenly, Alfred dashed down his newspaper, so startling Cora, she upset her cup. He raised the paper.

"Listen!" ejaculated he impressively—

"CURIOS DISCOVERY IN AN OLD HOUSE.—The workmen employed in the demolition of an old stone residence near Barton-upon-Humber, long a conspicuous object on the Humber bank, have exposed to view a genuine secret chamber. The house has long enjoyed the reputation of being haunted, successive tenants complaining of nocturnal noises. A couple of skeletons brought to light and other relics give colour to a tradition that a terrible tragedy was, at a far back time, enacted in the old house. A competent authority declares the bones to be those of male and female,

and an indentation on the larger skull points to a violent death."

"Now then, Alfred," said I, with some self-complaisance, "how are you going to get over that?"

"Bah!" returned he impatiently and obstinately, "I am not going to believe in ghosts yet."

"How do you account for those noises?" I persisted. "You will admit that you heard the whip on the door?"

"It is a mystery, and, as all such, must remain one," said Cora firmly.

I thought it politic, however strong my position, to hold my peace, for since Cora married, whenever a question is raised, I am always in the minority. But a wife should show partisanship.

IN SHALLOW WATERS.

BY A. ARMITT,

Author of "The Garden at Monkholme."

PART III.—continued.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUPPLEMENTARY.

SO ended Henry Dilworth's life-story. The strong swimmer, who had breasted the fiercer currents of life with courage and success, died worn out at last in those shallow waters of social existence where his best qualities seemed to avail him nothing. His own generosity betrayed him, and his own tenderness defeated him. The unselfishness of his nature combined with the prejudices of others to his undoing. For all his love and patience he had only that reward which the world and its children offer freely and fully to their best benefactors—permission and opportunity to make his self-sacrifice complete.

He was buried beside his wife in the graveyard at Elmdale, and a marble tablet was put up to his honour in the little church there. It was Miss Leake who suggested the tablet, and who found money for a memorial window in the chancel. Kate was absorbed in the thought of another sort of monument to his memory.

The tablet related his discoveries in geography and natural history; it spoke of him as one who had forwarded the cause of science and civilization throughout a long and devoted life, and who was an honour to his age and his country.

Kate made only one objection to the inscription on the tablet as first proposed. She admitted that the letters which signified his fellowship in various learned societies ought to follow his name, but she would not consent that they should be preceded by the title of Esquire.

"He owed nothing to his position, everything to himself; do not let us try to remember him except just as he was," Kate pleaded; and Jack, the perfidious Jack, to whom Miss Leake appealed

for support, upheld the younger woman's opinion on this as on every subject.

A friendly truce had followed the lovers' quarrel. It was not referred to after Henry Dilworth's death, and Kate, stunned by her great loss, overwhelmed by remorse and loneliness, had no thought to give to questions of love and marriage. She accepted silently Jack's friendly help and sympathy, and made no allusion to past relations; while Jack, on his side, was strangely humble and obliging. He rode miles on her errands, he wrote letters for her, he hunted up books that she required from the libraries of his friends, or bought them himself regardless of cost; he showed himself ready to beg, borrow, perhaps to steal, certainly to work and spend, on her behalf.

For Kate was engaged on a great task, one which seemed to her almost sacred. She was going carefully through all her father's notes and manuscripts, and preparing them for publication. She knew that it had been his intention to give to the world a summary of his labours and discoveries; he had amassed ample material, but he had perpetually put off the literary part of the work, which part was the most uncongenial to him. He had always hoped for his daughter's help in the revision of these papers, and now Kate worked at them alone, feeling this the only thing left to do for him. She would have liked much better to devote herself to his personal life; but it was too late for that; with her own hands she had cut away all hope of that special privilege for which she had always longed; she could no longer contribute to her father's happiness; she must be content only to finish his work.

She set herself to the task with the strong zeal of one who has suddenly come face to face with a great grief, and can only escape its terrible gaze by an averted look, fixed on a continual labour. She read; she studied; she made notes; she used numberless books of reference; Jack helping her and advising her in all. She knew that she was, in comparison with her father, ignorant and incompetent; but she felt that the strength of her love and determination might enable her to make a more worthy memorial of him than would have been produced by indifferent though more experienced hands.

Jack Langford was bold beyond reason in his efforts to help her. He borrowed from strangers, if necessary, books which he could not buy; he wrote to authorities, and inspected museums on her behalf. He took an immense amount of trouble only to verify a statement or elucidate a doubtful passage in the manuscript. A journey to London was treated by him as a trifle in those days, and he was ready to spend any amount of time in turning over folios and studying specimens in the British Museum.

When the work was finished, Jack encouraged Kate to submit it for correction to a scientific authority who had been a correspondent of her father's.

"I'd write myself and ask him to edit it," said Jack—who had, indeed, written on her behalf a number of letters which might have been looked upon as calmly impertinent if they had not for the most part been generously responded to—"but he'll pay twice the attention to a request from yourself."

The scientific authority proved to be a sympathetic and obliging person; and so the book was well corrected; some useful notes were added; and—with an appreciative preface from the authority—the book went through the press.

Then Kate's task was done. She did not desire fame for her father, nor even full acknowledgment of his work from the world; she only wished to save that work from being wasted and lost for want of the necessary final labour.

The first review of the book which appeared spoke respectfully of the character and achievements of Henry Dilworth, and approvingly of the manner in which his memorials had been edited and prepared for publication.

Miss Leake was delighted when it was put into her hands, her niece's recent labours were excused, and her own account of her brother-in-law's genius for ever justified to her little world. She read the review aloud to her sister Anna, quoted from it, wrongly, when occasion offered, mentioned it to her friends, and felt it to be a satisfactory thing altogether.

"Not that Kate has anything of a literary tendency—not at all," she thought it necessary to explain; "but the dear girl was so fond of her father, and so proud of him—naturally—that she is equal to any effort for his sake. And Mr. Langford has been so very good in assisting her, looking up references and so on. Otherwise I never would have consented to the thing; it was so much for her to do; but it has helped to divert her mind from her great trouble. So sudden it was, so unexpected, just when he had returned to England, and she was looking forward to seeing more of him than she had ever done before. He was a martyr to science, literally. Of course it was the exposure on the mountain which gave the last strain to his health; but it had been ruined before that by his work abroad. He had a splendid constitution, but he endured all sorts of hardships in his pursuit of knowledge. He would have lived twenty years longer if he could have been induced to settle down quietly and take care of himself."

Thus Miss Leake discoursed to a friend in the drawing-room at the Stepping Stones on the day after the review had appeared, while Kate sat, weary and sad, in the little room which was a library or breakfast-room as circumstances required.

The sadness which comes after the ending of a task and with the sense of its insufficiency, weighed upon her; there was, besides, a feeling of the blankness and aimlessness which dulled the interest of the future.

She had read the review, and sighed in reading it. Why had she worked for her father too late to win his approbation? Why had she not used her powers early enough to brighten his life of lonely effort? She leaned back in a low chair, and gazed into the flickering firelight, too listless to rouse herself to any occupation.

The door opened, and Jack came in, looked round the room, and seemed disappointed; then he caught sight of her in a shadowy corner, closed the door behind him, and came forward with a glance of satisfaction.

"Tired, Kate?"

"I have done nothing to make me so."

"That may be. How glad I am to find you

alone! It was sensible of you to sit here by yourself."

He drew a chair close to the fire, and sat down. Then he said, "The old ladies are talking about this review. Does it make you glad, Kate?"

He gazed hard at her as she leaned back in the shadow, changed a little from the proud and handsome girl of a year ago. She looked prouder, perhaps; but her manner was conspicuously gentle, and her eyes took a wistful expression when they turned to Jack. She was still dressed in deep mourning, though she had expressed scorn for it when first told to put it on.

"Why should I wear black for a man I was never allowed to see? who was not thought good enough for me to live with?" she had asked then; but the bitterness of her first sorrow had now passed away.

"I don't know," she answered; "it wasn't for that sort of thing that I cared to do it. It was that his work should be finished, not that people should praise it, that I cared. What's the good of praise? He will never know. But the work was what he *meant* to do; it was part of himself." Then her face softened, and the warmth of a smile found its way across to Jack's watching eyes.

"You have been very good to me," she said; "and I thank you very much indeed."

"And dismiss me as done with?" he said inquiringly.

"Oh, Jack, how can you?" she protested with a little laugh.

"But is it so, or is it not so, Kate? I want to know," he persisted.

"Why should I dismiss you?"

"Why, indeed? I see no valid reason; and every reason why I shoud stay. At least the reason of my own wish, which is sufficient for me—not for you, perhaps?"

"Why do you talk so?"

"Because I have waited long enough. You had no room for me in your mind some months ago, and I kept out of your sight—mentally, I mean. Now I want to come back; it is time. Don't you like me a little, Kate? Will you throw away another happiness?"

"Is it another happiness? You are young; you may find someone else. Why should you care?"

"I won't find any one else. And you are young, too. You have a long life before you probably; do you want it to be empty and bleak because you have made one mistake and lost one chance?"

"It wasn't for myself I cared."

"But you will have to care for yourself as time goes on. And I can't help caring for you throughout everything."

"But, Jack, you said you didn't."

"Kate," he answered with an air of serious reproof, "don't pretend that you were so simple as to believe me."

She blushed at his look as much as his words, and answered deprecatingly, "I didn't think of it; why should I? You had said so."

"Think of it now, then. You know I love you."

"Oh, Jack!"

"Is the phrase too strong? Well, then, I have a faint liking for you, the smallest suspicion of an admiration. Haven't you anything in return for me?"

He had leaned forward, and taken her hand, which trembled a little without endeavouring to retreat.

"Think of it, Katie," he said persuasively; "why shouldn't we live together, and be as happy as we can?"

"But I am not—nice. You know I'm not."

"Who said you were nice? and who wanted you to be nice?" he demanded.

He had drawn his chair nearer to hers, and put his arm loosely and, as it were, tentatively about her. "I never said I did, Kate."

She looked down at her own white fingers, which moved restlessly in his hand; and she said softly, "I do like you a little, Jack; but I don't think I should like to marry you, if that's what you mean."

"I wouldn't be so unreasonable as to ask you to like it, if only you would *do* it," he said; "couldn't you manage to think of it—dear?"

She drew a long breath as he uttered the word softly. Something in her own heart answered to his tenderness. She tried to glance at him, but her eyes fell. His head bent nearer to hers, and he said,

"Katie, darling!"

"Yes, Jack?"

She glanced at him timidly, interrogatively; and this time his eyes held hers, so that they were not withdrawn.

"Don't you love me, Katie?"

"Oh, Jack! do you think I do?"

Her doubt seemed to him a sufficient certainty, and he took the question as answered in his favour.

"You won't mind it so much when you are used to it; it isn't so bad after all—my being too fond of you, I mean," he apologized.

"Oh, Jack, how strange you are!" she laughed softly, as she leaned back in her chair, having received his first caress with a discretion which showed by nothing, except a heightened colour, what a new and strange experience it was to her.

"And suppose that, after all, I should spoil your life—as my father's was spoilt."

"I'll take my chance," he answered.

"At least," she said, "you know all my faults beforehand."

"Did I ever say so? Then I was an impudent fool. You haven't any faults; you are simply perfect."

She looked at him in amazement, and began to protest.

"How can you speak so, Jack, and expect me to believe you? Do you think people can't be fond of each other without telling—lies?"

"Fond of each other, pooh! what an expression! I was fond of you years ago, before I had any idea what a delicious creature you are to know properly, before—if you don't mind my mentioning it—I had kissed you."

"It wasn't necessary to mention it," Kate observed.

"Now I am madly, foolishly—no, I should say, wisely, discreetly, deliciously, admirably—in love with you. Even those amended expressions are absurdly inadequate and inappropriate—don't you think so?"

"I can't say," Kate answered with meekness; "perhaps I don't feel quite—like that."

"Don't you? poor darling! Do I get all the good of it? and do you only submit in order to make me happy?"

She turned to him then, with a tear-brightened tenderness shining in her eyes.

"No Jack, it isn't so; and never was; and never will be. You always did me good, and made me love you; yes, though I said you didn't, and thought I couldn't. If," she said, dropping her voice and her eyes at the same moment, "you had gone away as I told you, and left me, what a miserable creature I should have been!"

When Miss Leake came into the room half-an-hour later, she expressed some astonishment to find Mr. Langford there, and the candles not lighted, only the firelight shining ruddily into the darkness.

Jack sprang up to meet her, however, with a cordial greeting, and cut short her exclamations.

"It's all right, Miss Leake; Kate won't be an anxiety to you any more. I know how difficult she is to deal with; and I'm going to take her off your hands altogether. She's agreed to it at last."

"Kate never *was* an anxiety to me," Miss Leake replied with dignity, "and if you mean that she has consented to marry you, I am perfectly satisfied of course; I said so before when you asked me; but I shall miss her *very much* when she goes."

This marriage was an event which she had desired for two years at least; both her hearers were aware of it, and she knew that they were; but what did that matter when the proper thing had to be said?

Whether Jack and Kate lived happily ever afterwards is a question beyond the limits of this story; they had in their hands the best materials for the production of happiness. They suited one another, and loved one another; they possessed health, good intentions, and a sufficiency of money.

Jack always declared that his wife had a delicious disposition to live with; he was very proud of her, while she was loving and grateful to him. He used to observe with seriousness that she made him a very obedient wife; and there was more truth in the statement than would have been imagined by an outsider who remarked only the haughty beauty of the one, and the careless goodness of the other.

Kate's children were taught to be proud of their descent from Henry Dilworth. He was a hero whose story nourished their admiration of the heroic, and fed their love of the unselfish. He had been able to give little to his daughter in his lifetime, but at least he bequeathed to his descendants and hers no trivial example, no inherited meannesses, no darkened ideals. His life had been lonely, his love unsatisfied; but his was a link in a chain of lives, and the link was strong and pure. The influence of his character reached beyond the term of his own existence, and helped those who loved more happily, to love unselfishly too. His public life—the relation which he bore to the general human community—had never been useless or ignoble; and his private life, forlorn in the living of it, could not be regarded as devoid of noble issues.

In this world, where the human race grows slowly—if it grows at all—to lofty ideals; in this so-called civilized society, where we struggle with sins and sicknesses of every sort; with faults which private interest engenders in us; with tempta-

tions which our neighbours' example commands to us, and vices that we have inherited from our parents; in this strange sequence of generations, where the baby dies of its mother's disease, and the infant is born to a heritage of its father's faults, no life that is pure, simple, and honestly laborious can be regarded as insignificant. Is not all humanity indebted to every man who holds his own as its representative, and does not yield to a crowd of deteriorating influences? May not generations yet unborn trace back to such a one their health and their virtue? Will not the society that ignored him survive only by the force of his merit, and that of his fellows? Such a man may have had a sad life, a lonely life, a disappointed life: was it, then, a failure?

He had what he chose—the power to work well and live nobly; and the rest of this world's good things slipped easily away to the ignoble.

THE END.

HOLIDAYS IN THE PYRENEES.

A MONG excursions abroad, within comparatively easy reach of England, there is none more delightful, or which offers a greater change, than a trip to the Pyrenees; and it is somewhat remarkable that the English people, who are so fond of exploration, and of investigating foreign parts, and who, as each year comes round with its holiday-time, ask themselves, where shall we go? seem, as it were, to overlook this grand mountain country; and yet in no part of Europe is greater pleasure to be obtained by the lover of landscape, or is travelling more agreeable and easy, and living more reasonable, all things considered, than in the various centres of attraction which abound in the French Pyrenees. English people are certainly to be met with, but only in limited numbers, and almost exclusively, when homeward-bound, after a stay on the Riviera, or a run into Spain: and yet there are many weeks of the year, and those the most delightful for travelling, when the lover of fine scenery may enjoy it to his heart's content, and under the most favourable circumstances. As a rule, the French and Spaniards, who form the great majority of the visitors at such places as Luchon, Eaux-Bonnes, Bigorre, &c., rarely, if ever, arrive much before the 20th of July; while during the month of May and all June, when Nature is at her very best, and the mountains of the Pyrenees in their fullest loveliness, the hotels are empty. Artistic pursuits led me into the Pyrenees for the first time soon after the Franco-German war, and I have since passed the entire spring, summer and autumn of many years in that delightful land, searching out and finding increasing and fresh beauties; and so impressed am I with the attractions of this fair land, that I should rejoice could these few lines induce any of my countrymen in search of something new, and who had only perhaps thought in a distant way of the Pyrenees for a holiday trip, to go and see for themselves scenery of the wildest and of the sweetest kind, to breathe the purest of air, and to pass a few days or weeks, as time or inclination may permit, amid scenes of nature, which travel

and research tell me are among the most enjoyable in Europe.

It is sometimes said by visitors that the one great drawback to the Pyrenean landscape is the absence of water; for of lakes such as in Switzerland, Italy, or Scotland, there are none. The few small sheets of water existing are at great heights, and have to be toiled for; the way to them is generally long and tedious, and they have to be visited *per se*, as they are not in any line of route or in any beaten track; nevertheless, they are perfect when attained, and amply repay one for the somewhat toilsome ascent. It is, however, this very absence of vast bodies of water, such as Lake Leman, Constance and others, which constitutes the charm of novelty, and which renders the Pyrenees so distinct from Switzerland; the scenery also is of a somewhat different character; there is less snow than in Switzerland, the mountains are less gigantic, but the vegetation and colours are simply exquisite. The traveller will find nothing equivalent in majesty to Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, but he will find mountains ranging in height from 6,000 to 11,000 feet, and variety and beauty of scenery at every step; while some of the chief mountain-tops, such as the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, Pic du Midi d'Ossau, Vignemale, and others, attainable without danger or great difficulty, command views of which it is impossible to give any description; particularly that from the famous Pic du Midi de Bigorre, easily accessible from June to September, from Bigorre or Barèges. The view from this summit—9,800 feet above sea-level—is interesting beyond description; the position of the Pic is such that it commands the entire chain of the Pyrenees, and it is possible (although certainly of very rare occurrence), under certain conditions of the atmosphere, to perceive the Atlantic and Mediterranean, although 200 miles apart. In the latter part of the month of June, when the paths are fairly free from snow, the ascent is entirely void of danger, and may be performed on horseback to the very summit; while in July, August, and September it is simply a pleasurable excursion for those who enjoy mountain climbing. There is an excellent hotel, where comfortable quarters may be had for the night, if wished, although the excursion from Barèges and the return journey is easily accomplished between early morning and evening. Irrespective of this and other of the high snow-peaks, there are many lesser cimes, for the ascent of which every convenience is to be met with. They are too numerous to mention, but are to be found along the line of route in a trip through the Pyrenees. Then again, there is that amazing and world-famed natural wonder, Gavarnie, which alone is worth a long journey to see, and yet, which lies within easy reach, once one is in the heart of the Pyrenees; nothing so unique, or on so vast a scale as the Cirque de Gavarnie is to be seen elsewhere. From Luz, or Saint Sauveur, which two little towns lie in the beaten track of the tourist, one travels along a high, well-kept road to the very Cirque itself, and can gaze upward and around upon this great and remarkable work of Nature capped with eternal snow. The wondrously beautiful Vallée du Lys near Luchon, with its barrier of gigantic mountains rising almost perpendicular 5,000 feet, one mass of verdure, crowned by the glaciers of Crabioules, and

the wild conglomeration of snow-peaks, styled Maladetta, or "the cursed mountain," also one of the sights for the traveller to Luchon, are some among the many striking and remarkable features of Pyrenean landscape. Not least of all, however, in beauty and interest, are the myriad torrents, streams, and waterfalls; nor in the splendid verdure of the mountain-slopes, or in the wild desolation of huge and towering rocks, is there lack of variety; indeed, the eye is constantly lost in admiration, while it is relieved at every turn of the road, or bend of the mountain-pass, by an ever-changing landscape.

High season in the Pyrenees is from the middle of July to September. During the months of May and June all hotels are comparatively empty, and prices are at their lowest. In the chief towns, such as Luchon, Bigorre, Cauterets, and Eaux-Bonnes, there is no difficulty whatever in finding most comfortable quarters, in even the best hotels, at ten to twelve francs per day (everything included); the living is excellent, and the beds good. There is also no difficulty for those who require saddle-horses, or carriages in obtaining them at exceedingly moderate rates—that is to say, at minimum tariff; indeed, during the greater portion of this time special and easy terms can be made for long excursions, guides as well as hotel-keepers, and all interested in the arrival of travellers, being only too pleased to see them, and anxious to be agreeable, for it being out of season every additional visitor means so much unexpected gain.

With the advent of the full season—say, about the 15th to 20th July, and during August and September—prices advance, but in no case, or at no period, are they exorbitant or even excessive, provided the tourist limits himself to reasonable wants. It is not difficult to live for twelve to fourteen francs a day, even in the height of the season and in the best hotels; this includes bedroom, according to situation and floor, *table d'hôte*, and attendance; for saddle-horses and carriages there is a fixed tariff, and omnibuses and diligences are plentiful, and fares reasonable. Bachelors who are good walkers, and who can put up with a knapsack or very little luggage to send on from one town to another, will find a fortnight or three weeks spent in the Pyrenees replete with interest and enjoyment.

The tourist who prefers quiet to bustle, who likes to journey comfortably, and who does not go abroad to seek after or mix with his fellow-men, but who travels for scenery, should visit the Pyrenees in May, June, or July. In the former of these months, as also during the early part of June, he will meet with occasional difficulties, it is true, in certain passes of the mountains on account of the snows, but he will find nowhere any ordinary excursion impracticable. During the latter half of June until the end of September travelling is not only easy but enjoyable, and the beauties of the glens, valleys, and torrents during June and July are at their highest. In the full swing of the season—say, during all August and September—the visitor to the Pyrenean stations who is fond of society and amusement, will find much to captivate him, for Luchon, Cauterets, Bagnères de Bigorre, and Eaux-Bonnes are then a study of life and character, differing essentially from Switzerland and Germany in that one meets in vast numbers, and who form the great majority,

the wealthy residents of the great French and Spanish cities; one meets with the merchants of Bordeaux and Toulon, the Parisian fresh from asphalte of the boulevards, and the Madrilene from his hot and dusty capital; these form fully three-fourths of the visitors in full season. The Brazilian and the Portuguese are also to be seen there; also the Russian, and occasionally an English family, but they are few in number, and lost in the crowd of French and Spanish. The Frenchman is proud, and naturally so, of his renowned Pyrenees; he swears by Luchon and believes in Cauterets; he feels it a duty to drink the waters, and go to his casino; and he is as happy, pleasant, and agreeable, as only a contented Frenchman can be. The Spaniard is hardly less at home, for he lays claim to a share of the Pyrenees, and finding the French side much more enjoyable than his own, he comes to keep his neighbour company; and thus year by year they meet, and perform, as it were, the most delightful of all pilgrimages. Luchon is perhaps the most fashionable of all the centres of attraction, and Cauterets the most crowded; the former town, justly entitled the Queen of the Pyrenees, possesses a site all but unrivalled for beauty, and is surrounded by many objects of national interest, all within easy reach, foremost among which the beautiful Vallée du Lys.

The mountain guides are more numerous at Luchon than elsewhere, and form a picturesque group when assembled in full force. Great liberality is displayed by the municipal board of the town of Luchon, games and amusements being freely given during the season, while in the evening the splendid casino is crowded with guests. The majority of visitors to Luchon stay some little time, many remain during four or five weeks, so much attraction is there to be found. The hotels are large and numerous and, upon the whole, exceedingly well conducted. Bagnères de Bigorre, the largest and most important town in the mountain district, is of a quieter nature; it is charmingly situated at the foot of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre, and should on no account be passed over. It is one of the sentinels of the Pyrenean chain at the extremity of the rich plain of Tarbes, and a delightful resting-place for a short time. It has a winter season, with an English Church open all the year round. Cauterets and Eaux-Bonnes are not less interesting; indeed, the traveller who finds himself once within the charmed circle, will not rest content until he has seen all that can be seen in the time at his disposal; and towards this end and purpose the numerous excellent guide-books which exist both in French and English will give him all possible information.

By the end of September all is over. The swallows in their flight are not more regular as to time, or more sudden in their coming and going, than are the visitors to the Pyrenees. They arrive in a body, and they leave in like manner, so that the month of October, which is often there, as in many other parts of Europe, one of the most delightful of the whole year, is perhaps the most dull. Hotel-keepers and guides are worn out with the feverish excitement of the few preceding weeks, while the horses, which have had to do in three months the work of a whole year, are reduced to little more than skin and bone. The few visitors who remain appear like forgotten

guests, and general silence prevails; and yet the glens and valleys of the Pyrenees are rich with the red, bronze, and yellow of the autumn leaf, the sky is bright and clear, the glaciers brilliant, and the air full of freshness and health. The traveller or tourist who finds himself there at such a moment need not despair; he will do well to linger yet a few days, if time permit, and enjoy the splendour which Nature so lavishly spreads out before him.

J. W. ANDERSON.

FRIENDSHIP.

LET cynics mock at friendship's charms,
And scoff at joys no sneer can end!
Be thine to know the heart that warms,
And eyes whose brightest glances send
A welcome to th' approaching friend;
To feel what cynics ever shun,
And friendship's self alone can buy,
That mystic, sympathetic tie
That links two kindred souls in one;
That, absent e'en, if one should weep
The other feels a pain as deep,
And gladdens when 'tis gone.
That friendship is; kind Fate forfend
The day thou shalt not have a friend!

FRANCIS ERNEST BRADLEY.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

THE full story of the origin of this beautiful ballad, and of the events which occurred subsequently in connection with it, has now come out. In the *Bland-Burges Papers*, recently published by Mr. Murray, under the careful editorship of Mr. James Hutton, it may be found that when James Burges (who afterwards became Sir James Burges Lamb) was thirteen, he fell passionately in love with Lady Margaret Lindsay, daughter of the Earl of Balcarres. The affection was returned; and as the two grew up, only became worse and worse. Alas! it was not then to be realized; parents and prudence intervened, and to make the separation complete, the earl persuaded the beautiful girl to marry an old General Fordyce. The sister of Lady Margaret (Lady Anne Bernard), aided, perhaps, by another daughter of the family, Lady Elizabeth Hardwicke, celebrated the incident in those lines, which, on all hands, are admitted to be one of the gems of Scottish song. The end was strange—romantic, and perhaps also unromantic. Years after, when Sir James Burges had been twice a widower, and when the old general had long departed, the two were thrown together again, and actually married. The plants of spring made a show of flowering again, in the brief sunshine of a St. Martin's summer.

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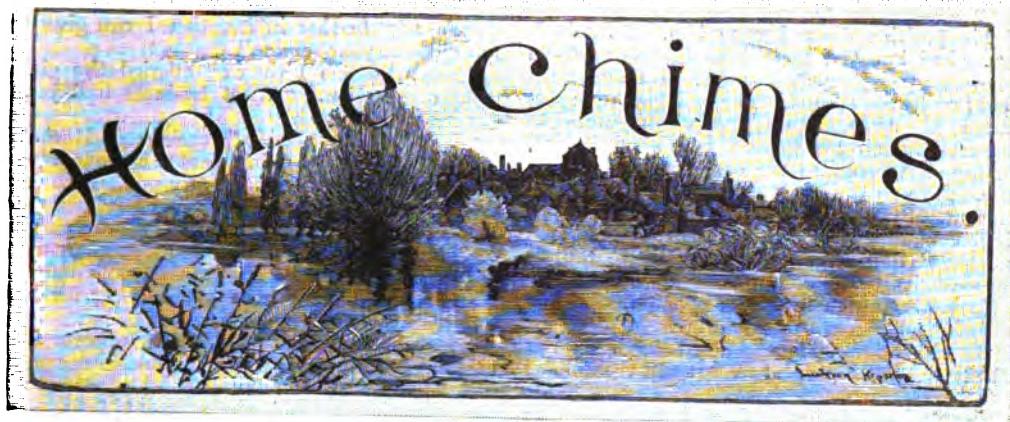
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VOL. III. No. 31.]

LONDON: AUGUST 1, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

OUT OF HIS GRAVE.

BY H. E. CLARKE.

CHAPTER L

NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CHARLES HARBOTTLE walked through the sunshiny morning, spud in hand, and thought of nothing at all. He was going to inspect some labourers who were widening a ditch in one of his fields, but he was not very anxious about it, nor indeed about anything else. The crops were coming on very well, the hay-harvest had been fairly good, he had sold a horse for more than it was worth, and a lot of sheep at a good price per head. The country therefore appeared to him to be in a prosperous condition, and he was as well satisfied with Providence as a British farmer can ever be.

He turned out of the high road into a narrow grass-covered drove, and proceeded along this for about a hundred yards, when he climbed a high stile, and took a footpath across the fields. He had not gone far when a strange sound caused him suddenly to stop and listen. It was rather like low thunder heard afar off, but it could not be that. All at once his perplexed countenance cleared, and he strode on rather faster than before in the direction whence the sound came. "Its Nebuchadnezzar again," he muttered, "what on earth is he up to now?"

Over two more stiles he clambered hastily, the sound growing louder and louder till it was recognizable as the roaring of a bull. At the third stile he stayed, and without showing any disposition to climb it, stood looking into the pasture beyond. What he saw caused him to utter a startled cry, and to turn very pale. The next moment he had vaulted over the stile, and was running, waving his spud meanwhile and shouting

vigorously, towards a young girl in a light dress who stood at the farther end of the field.

Looking upon this young lady for the moment (if we may do so without disrespect) merely as the apex of a triangle, of which the hedge at the opposite end of the field is the base, we perceive two forces converging upon her along the sides of the triangle with great speed. The one is Charles Harbottle with his spud, the other Charles Harbottle's violent-tempered bull Nebuchadnezzar. The former has a little start, the latter travels fastest; and one thing is clear to the impartial observer, namely that Charles, even if he reaches the lady a second before Nebuchadnezzar, will not be able to render her any assistance. For a gentleman armed merely with a spud is no match for a large bull in a towering passion. This thought was in Harbottle's mind as he ran, but it made no difference. He could not stand and see the young lady gored and trampled by the furious brute without making an effort to rescue her. Probably the only result of his interference would be that two persons would suffer damage or death instead of one, but that could not be helped, he hardened his heart and ran. The young lady it would seem had not perceived her danger until Harbottle's shout had awakened her to it, and now she was paralyzed with terror. She had been sketching, and her brushes and papers and camp stool were strewed about in front of her. Harbottle's eye took in these particulars, and then another, which was that he and the bull would arrive at their journey's end at one and the same moment. With one last despairing effort he cast himself before the girl, it was all he could do. There was a terrific shock, and he felt himself being projected through the air as if from a catapult; the rest was darkness and silence.

Coarse grass and reeds and brambles and nettles instead of bed-clothes! It was perplexing, thought Charles as he came to himself. But whence came all this torn and tangled drapery in which he was twisted? and whose long hair was that wound about his left arm? Suddenly a sense

of his position dawned upon him. Nebuchadnezzar had knocked them both into a dry ditch. But where was Nebuchadnezzar? He raised his head and looked around. The bull had taken the ditch in his stride, and was thoroughly puzzled to understand how his victims had escaped him, sinking as it were into the earth under his very nose. He was diligently exploring even at this moment. Such a thing had never happened to him before, and to judge by his muttered remarks and the waving of his highly expressive tail, he was excessively annoyed.

Harbottle turned to his companion, who had fainted.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed aloud. "Miss Sacheverell, of all people! What will the colonel say?"

Miss Sacheverell, having fainted, made no reply; and Harbottle proceeded to raise her in his arms. She was not very heavy, and he was a stout, muscular fellow.

"I can get to the stile before that brute sees us, if I am quick," he muttered.

But when his arrangements were complete, and he attempted to rise, he sunk back with a groan. One of his ankles was sprained, and he could not even walk, to say nothing of running. At this juncture Miss Sacheverell drew a deep breath and opened her eyes. The sun-burnt, hirsute face above her did not seem to reassure her in any way, and she let off one or two piercing screams.

"For goodness' sake be quiet," said Harbottle. "You'll have Nebuchadnezzar here again if you don't mind."

"Where am I?" demanded the distracted young lady, struggling to free herself. "Where is my dear father? Unhand me, sir, if you are a gentleman. Oh, let me go—let me go!"

"You may go," retorted Harbottle, aggrieved by this behaviour; "I don't want to keep you. Go and find your dear father, and ask him to send a wheelbarrow for me. Be as quick as you can or Nebuchadnezzar will be back, and in that case you will probably have to send several wheelbarrows. 'They picked up,' concluded Harbottle gravely, 'they picked up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.' That will be the kind of thing."

Miss Sacheverell had by this time climbed out of the ditch. She looked divinely lovely, Harbottle thought, with all her hair tumbling over her shoulders, and her hat hanging by a ribbon round her neck, and green and yellow stains and gaping three-cornered rents in her light dress. One of her shoes was gone too. He knew that because he was sitting on it; but she was much too dignified to let the fact be apparent.

She put her hands to her temples in a bewildered fashion.

"I don't know what has happened," she said wildly. "Am I dreaming? Are you mad? Why do you talk of Nebuchadnezzar? Where is that dreadful animal? Why do you sit in the ditch?"

"Nebuchadnezzar is that dreadful animal's name," remarked Harbottle, settling himself more comfortably; "he will probably let you know where he is in a few minutes; he can't be very far away. I don't know whether you are dreaming or not. I am not mad, I am only a harmless lunatic; and I am sitting in the ditch because I have sprained my ankle, and can't stand. If

there's any further information I can give you, I'm quite at your service."

"But why was I there?" queried the girl in utter desperation. "What business had you to put me in the ditch?"

"I didn't put you in," exclaimed Harbottle indignantly, "and I didn't want to come in myself. You went first, and seemed very anxious to go as deep as you could, and like a fool I followed you. I don't know whether you found what you went for, but I know there are enough thorns in me to light a fire with, and I am positively bloated with nettle-stings. What were you looking for down there?"

"I am not awake," said Miss Sacheverell decidedly; "I am having a nightmare."

A muffled roar came from Nebuchadnezzar, who was careering around the adjacent field. Miss Sacheverell started and turned white as she recognized the sound.

"A very bad nightmare," remarked Harbottle. "A nightmare with horns. Its fortunate," he added, rubbing his back, "that I had the points sawn off a few weeks back. If I hadn't—" He did not trouble to finish the sentence, but Miss Sacheverell shuddered. The sight of the bull had brought recent occurrences back to her memory.

"Oh, I recollect, now!" she exclaimed. "Noble young man! You saved my life, and now you are crippled. What can I do to show my gratitude?"

"By my halidom and in good sooth, fair damsel," remarked Harbottle, "a pretty, little tiny kickshaw in the way of a wheelbarrow is all I desire at the present moment."

"I think your head must have been injured," said Miss Sacheverell, looking at him in much perplexity. "Does it feel bad?"

Before Harbottle could reply, however, his questioner gave a startling screech, and fled like lightning.

"Ah," soliloquized Harbottle, "I thought you were holding Nebuchadnezzar too cheap, young lady. If he catches you now there will be a nasty accident, I expect."

He raised himself with some difficulty to see the result of the race, but fortunately for Miss Sacheverell she had taken alarm early enough, and by the time Nebuchadnezzar reached the stile she was half way across the next field.

"And now," said Harbottle to himself, "I must wait until she sends me help, I suppose."

Colonel Sacheverell was universally admitted to be the greatest swell in Hilbury. That is not saying so very much perhaps, for Hilbury was not an aristocratic town by any means. The vicar, the doctor, and their wives, with the colonel and his daughter, composed the polite society of the place; and the colonel had been known to hint that the doctor might consider himself lucky to be allowed to associate with a higher class than he could have aspired to if—well, in point of fact, if there had been any one else in Hilbury to take his place.

Putting these three families aside, there was socially speaking little but chaos in the town. A clamour of Church against Dissent, of Trade against Agriculture, of Liberal against Conservative, did certainly arise from the depths; and certainly the vicar and the colonel considered it part of their duty as superior creatures to uphold Our

Ancient Religion and Our Glorious Constitution and the Sacred Rights of Property. But when they had pointed out to the weltering masses which was the right and proper way to wester, they considered their work done, and had no further part nor lot with them.

The doctor, on the other hand, as became a man who earned his living from all parties alike, affected to hold his judgment in suspense. "I observe," he said, "I observe and inquire; I do not dogmatize. I take Montaigne as my model." This was a remark he had heard made long before, and had liked the sound of. He had not read a line of Montaigne, but that didn't matter because none of the others had either.

The three oracles were sitting over their wine in the colonel's dining-room on the evening of the Nebuchadnezzar episode, and naturally that event formed the subject of their conversation.

"One of the most wonderful escapes I ever heard of," the doctor remarked; "a sprained ankle and some bruises—and the odds were decidedly in favour of one of them being killed, and the other maimed for life. The young fellow certainly behaved very courageously. If your daughter had received the blow instead of him, colonel, she must have been killed on the spot."

"Very plucky, very plucky indeed," said the colonel, smoothing his large gray moustache. "I must do something for the fellow. What sort of a position is he in?"

"The Harbottles are well-to-do farmers," struck in the vicar. "This boy's father died some seven years back. He's the eldest of three sons, and there are two daughters. They all live with their mother, and Charlie manages the farm. I fancy he inherited some money from an aunt a few years ago, but I'm not quite sure."

"Charlie is a very intelligent young man," asserted the doctor.

"Oh, yes, as for intellect," replied the vicar, with a slight shrug; "his intellect is all right, no doubt."

"You seem to imply a reservation, Maynard," remarked the colonel.

"No-o-o-o," replied the vicar dubiously. "He has the flightiness of youth, colonel; he thinks he knows better than his elders. He has some eccentric notions."

"Hah!" said the colonel, knitting his brows, "on what subjects, pray?"

The doctor laughed.

"Maynard is afraid he's a bit of a Radical, aren't you, Maynard?" he said.

"If he's one of that set," began the colonel indignantly, "I'll have nothing to do with him."

"But surely," interposed the doctor, "but surely you wouldn't taboo a man for his political opinions? He's a plucky fellow, whether he's a Radical or not, and this is an age of toleration."

"I don't know whether you mean to suggest, Dr. Vivian, that I am intolerant," said the colonel with severity, "if so you are mistaken. I loathe intolerance. I am as tolerant as a man can be, but by George, sir, if I catch any infernal Radical on my premises I'll horsewhip him."

"A very singular way of showing toleration," remarked the doctor.

"You two are at it as usual," said the vicar, "and as usual you are fighting about nothing. I know young Harbottle very well, and I think him

a good fellow, whom no one need be ashamed to call his friend."

"Maynard," said the colonel, "nobody can say I am a prejudiced man. I will ask the fellow to dinner next week, and you two shall meet him. If we can't turn him inside out between us its a pity." And the colonel smoothed his swelling shirt-front with the air of a man to whom the turning inside out of a fellow-creature was a very small matter.

If Harbottle had heard the above conversation it is probable that he would not have accepted the colonel's invitation; but he did not hear it, and as a matter of fact he was glad to have a chance of seeing Miss Sacheverell again and talking to her. She had awakened his curiosity. "She's very beautiful," he reflected, "but she's a little peculiar. She talks like a penny novelette heroine; 'un-hand me,' and 'noble young man,' and so on. But perhaps that pompous old idiot, the colonel, has taught her that kind of thing."

Miss Sacheverell, for her part, was in a considerable flutter at the idea of meeting her preserver once more. She was young and romantic, and her father had kept so strict a watch over her that she had not been able to get any wholesome first-hand knowledge of the work-a-day world. She was prepared for heroes and "adventures high," and just now she seemed to have chanced upon something of the sort. Here was the usual courageous and handsome young man who saved her life one moment, and joked at his heroism the next. She had read of such people in Ouida's novels, but until now she had looked for them in vain. What was his next move to be? He was to win her somehow, of course—but how? With the colonel's blessing, or in the teeth of the colonel's curse? On the whole, she was inclined to think the latter. It was more in accordance with the spirit of Ouida's novels. To her personally it was a matter of considerable indifference how it came about. The colonel was a dutiful parent in his way no doubt, but he was too peppery, too much like his favourite curries, in fact, to be "good for human nature's daily food." Besides, she had never noticed that the heroines of fiction made much account of their fathers, and she didn't know why she should. She was very much bored with her present aimless existence, and she did not think any change could be for the worse. She expected much from the dinner, and so did Harbottle; and, as usual in such cases, they were both disappointed. The bewitching young hoyden, with tumbled hair, fallen hat, and torn dress, was merely the prim regulation hostess, careful exceedingly that every one should have enough to eat. The eccentric orator of the ditch was a rather shy young gentleman in dress clothes, who agreed with what was said, and did not venture an opinion of his own.

It was a sad failure, and when Maggie left the gentlemen to their wine, she could have cried with vexation.

But when she had gone something happened. The doctor had got an idea that it devolved upon him to draw his young friend out, and this he proceeded to do in a blundering, tactless way enough.

At first Harbottle was wary, and declined to commit himself, but at last, after some more than usually intemperate speech of the colonel, who was all too anxious for the fray, he delivered a

neat retort, which made the doctor guffaw, and the vicar himself smile behind his hand.

The colonel waxed very red, but said nothing at the moment, there being indeed absolutely nothing to say; but "hushed in grim repose," he awaited an opening for revenge. It was not very long in coming. Some random remark of Harbottle's was duly pounced upon, pilloried, and pelted with the elocutionary equivalents of dead cats and rotten eggs. But the colonel felt that his reproof did not tell as it ought to have done; he was too much in earnest, and he became angry and disgusted with everything.

The doctor, who had an especial gift for always doing the wrong thing at the wrong time, chose this opportunity to introduce his favourite subject—Socialism.

"Dear me," said Maggie to herself, "what a noise they are making to be sure. I think I'll better send Smith to tell them tea is ready."

Even as she stretched her hand to the bell, the dining-room door was flung open, and the colonel's voice at high-indignation pitch was heard proclaiming that the man who could express such sentiments ought not to be harboured in a respectable house. Maggie flew downstairs; she was acquainted with her father's method of conducting an argument, and she was not surprised.

The doctor looked the express image of stupefaction. The vicar was saying "Tut—tut—tut" softly to himself, and twirling his thumbs. Harbottle, flushed and handsome, and the very ideal of a hero, was searching for his hat. It was a critical moment, and Maggie displayed great generalship.

"I have been waiting for you ever so long," she cried, "your tea will be cold, Mr. Maynard, and your chocolate has been made this twenty minutes, Dr. Vivian."

The two old gentlemen toddled upstairs, glad to get away, and then Maggie turned to Harbottle, who had found his hat and was holding out his hand to say good-night.

"Oh, you must not go like this, indeed you must not," exclaimed Maggie, "I haven't thanked you yet for saving me from that dreadful bull."

"The colonel," stammered Harbottle, "a little misunderstanding—very sorry—but—"

"Oh yes," said Maggie in a matter-of-fact way, "you have been arguing, and father cannot argue without losing his temper. We shan't see him again this evening; he will go to bed, and tomorrow he will have forgotten all about it. But you must come and have some tea."

Harbottle, however, refused to go upstairs, and so at last a compromise was effected, and Maggie brought him his tea in the library. He was a very long while drinking it, and they had quite a confidential conversation. When he went away he knew it was all up with him; he was badly in love. It seemed a hopeless passion too, all things considered, for a night's rest had not on this occasion its usual effect upon the colonel. He informed his daughter at breakfast that he believed young Harbottle to be an atheist and a socialist, and added that in future he should certainly cut him dead. "Its awkward, of course," he said, "the fellow behaved courageously and all that, but one must draw the line somewhere."

Maggie was silent; for her own part she did not propose to draw the line in exactly the place

specified by her father. She met Harbottle by chance in the street a few days after, and shook hands with him cordially.

"Your father won't look at me," he said, "I thought you were probably going to cut me too."

"I can't help what my father does," she said smiling, "you saved my life, and that is a little attention I don't feel justified in forgetting. But you must have said some very awful things the other night."

"I did indeed, some quite inexcusable things," replied Harbottle, "I said I didn't wonder that the poor were discontented; and I even went so far as to add that I didn't believe poverty was exclusively caused by improvidence and immorality."

"Then father said that such doctrines struck at the very roots of society," remarked Maggie.

"Yes—but did he tell you all about it?" asked Harbottle in surprise.

"No, but that's what he always says when any one disagrees with him," replied Maggie; "it's his way of saying he thinks differently."

This quarrel with her father did not by any means lower Harbottle in Maggie's estimation, but rather the reverse. There were many precedents for it in fiction, and she had a strong conviction that if she had been a man she would have quarrelled with him long ago. She met Harbottle once or twice about this time, and was always exceedingly gracious, and the poor young man became fairly infatuated.

Then a break occurred in this promising romance; the colonel and Maggie went off on a Continental trip for three months, and Harbottle was left lamenting.

When they returned strange rumours preceded them. The colonel was going to be married; the widower had chosen unto himself a widow—a Mrs. Murgatroyd, fat, fair, and a trifle over forty; but rich, very rich indeed. Harbottle was in a fever; absence had made his heart grow fonder, and he was desperately afraid that Maggie might have forgotten him, or worse still, found a cavalier more to her taste in her travels. This last hypothesis tormented him greatly. If he could only see her and speak to her, he flattered himself he would soon get to know whether she was still fancy free or not, but either fate or Maggie herself was against their meeting.

In the space of three weeks he only caught a momentary glimpse of her from afar off, although he wasted a deal of time in loitering about her favourite walks, and laboriously preparing in other ways for an accidental meeting.

One day a fancy took him to visit the field in which the Nebuchadnezzar episode had occurred. The bull had been exiled after that escapade, but Harbottle had no idea that Maggie's recollections of the place could be pleasant enough to prompt her to return. He did not expect to meet anybody; he went like a love-sick gentleman as he was, to ponder and be sentimental in solitude. He looked over the stile before he climbed it, as on that former occasion—and to his great astonishment beheld the same figure as then, and in precisely the same place; and though there was no bull visible, he made exactly as much haste as if the young lady was still in peril no less imminent.

Doubtless this strange phenomenon was caused by the unconscious association of ideas.

There was real pleasure in Maggie's eyes as she saw him approach, and she put out both hands to meet his.

"Why I thought I was never to see you any more," he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Oh, I am so glad to meet you," she cried; "father has forbidden me ever to speak to you again."

"I have no such additional inducement as that," he said, "but I am very glad indeed notwithstanding. And how did you enjoy your holiday, and what did you do with yourselves all the time?"

Maggie's face clouded; she compressed her lips for a moment, as if trying to control herself. But she had no very serious intentions in that direction.

"We trailed about," she said passionately; "we trailed about after that odious—vulgar—intolerable—Mrs. Murgatroyd."

Harbottle opened his eyes wide and then his mouth; the latter he shut speedily, with a low whistle of astonishment.

"You disapprove of your future stepmother then?" he said feebly.

"Disapprove of her!" echoed Maggie. "I hate her; I will never live in the same house with her; I have told father so. We have had an awful quarrel, and he says that if I don't like to be civil to her I can go to—"

"Yes, I understand," replied Harbottle with a nod of entire comprehension.

Up to this point Maggie had been talking with great vigour and animation, and looking bright and excited, but now, without preface of any sort, she burst into tears, remarking that she hadn't a friend in the world, and wished she were dead. Harbottle watched her like a man in deep thought for a minute or so. Then his face cleared, he cast his hat upon the ground as if it were a gage and he were challenging the universe, and folding the distressed young lady in his arms, kissed her upon the forehead three several times.

Half an hour afterwards, when they parted, the plan of campaign had been arranged. It was decided that the colonel's consent to their marriage was to be dispensed with, and that the said marriage was to take place as soon as possible. Harbottle had had his eye on a compact little farm at about twenty miles' distance from Hilbury for some time. It would be the very thing for them. His own property was all invested in sound and well-paying stocks; he would sell out, buy the farm, and leave his younger brother to carry on his father's business for the benefit of the family.

"How soon," said Harbottle to himself as he went home, "how soon everything is arranged when one knows what one wants, and possesses decision of character!"

CHAPTER II.

A DEFAULTER.

JOHN GREGORY GARSTANG, Solicitor, had been sitting at his desk, doing nothing particular, for nearly an hour. His clerk in the room outside had been similarly occupied ever since ten o'clock, but just now a thought had struck him, and he

was writing a letter to "Dearest Polly" at a great rate. Austin Friars is generally quiet, and this morning it was quieter than usual. Mr. Garstang had taken offices in this particular spot because of its quietude. He said that a solicitor's business was all brain work, and that it was impossible for a man to exercise his brain properly in the midst of a never-ceasing roar of traffic. From this point of view nothing could be better than Austin Friars; but some of his friends hinted that though Mr. Garstang had succeeded admirably in getting a quiet place wherein to exercise his brain, he had not succeeded nearly so well in getting anything to exercise it on.

Others, however, pointed out that though Garstang didn't seem to do much at his office, and was invariably ready for a chat, or a lunch, or a day in the country, yet he always had money, dressed well, and lived in expensive West-end chambers.

Therefore they argued, as it was well known that he had no private means, he must make money at his business in some way or other.

The little clock on Mr. Garstang's mantelpiece tinkled out the information that it was twelve, and Mr. Garstang yawned.

"I've a good mind to go to lunch now," he muttered, "but if I do the afternoon will seem so long."

This weighty consideration, combined with the fact that he was not at all hungry, kept him at his seat for another ten minutes; but at the end of that time he could endure his boredom no more.

"Williams," he said, appearing suddenly in the outer office, and scarcely giving the clerk time to hide his love-letter under a piece of blotting-paper, "Williams, I am going to lunch. If anything is wanted, send for me to the restaurant."

"Yes, sir," said Williams gravely; and his master vanished. The clerk finished his love-letter in rather more of a hurry than before, took down his hat, locked the office door, and vanished also. He knew Mr. Garstang would not be back for two hours and a half at least, during which time he himself would dine, smoke a pipe, play a game or so of billiards, and flirt a little with a pretty barmaid in Broad Street.

Now it happened that Mr. Garstang only smoked one cigar after lunch that day instead of two, and therefore returned to Austin Friars a trifle earlier than usual. It also happened that Williams played three games at billiards, and so was a trifle later; the result of which two circumstances was, that when Mr. Garstang arrived, he was unable to get into his office. His indignation was boundless, and it would have fared ill with Williams if he had turned up at that moment; but fortunately for himself, Williams had not quite finished his third game.

Mr. Garstang was fuming and fretting and getting through an unusual amount of profanity, when a postman appeared, who, having tried the office-door, would have pushed a letter through the slit; but Mr. Garstang saved him the trouble and took it.

The postmark was Hilbury, and a singular change came over Mr. Garstang's face as he looked at the address.

"Charlie's writing, by Jove," he muttered, opening the envelope.

The letter was very short, but its effects upon the reader was extraordinary. He became very pale, and then very red, and beads of perspiration rolled down his face.

"At last," he said under his breath. "At last." And then he put the letter away into his breast-pocket, and began to walk as if for a wager.

He found himself in the region of the Minories without knowing in the least how he got there, but the first shock was over, and his presence of mind began to return. He took the letter out and read it again. Apparently there was nothing in it to justify his perturbation.

"My dear Jack," it ran, "I propose running up to London the day after to-morrow, and shall call upon you in Austin Friars, at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. I want to look over my securities and take your advice as to realizing, for—don't be alarmed—I believe I am likely to get married very shortly. Your affectionate cousin,

"CHARLES HARBOTTLE."

"Yes," observed Mr. Garstang to himself, "it's all up this time, and no mistake. I've stalled him off pretty easily till now, but marriage does the trick. Poor Charles, I'm very sorry for him, but it can't be helped."

Then Mr. Garstang, once more cool and collected, proceeded quickly back to his office. Williams was writing as if his life depended upon how much work he got through.

"Anybody called?" asked his employer carelessly.

"No, sir, nobody."

"Any letters?"

"No sir, none."

Mr. Garstang went into his room and shut the door, nay more, he plugged the keyhole with blotting paper, and drew the little brass bolt. Then he unlocked and opened his fire-proof safe. Inside was a cash-box, a bank-book, a sealed envelope, and one or two rolls of papers. The envelope was marked "Will of Charles Harbottle. For safe keeping."

"Deuced little good, that," remarked Mr. Garstang, throwing it aside. Then he took out the cash-box, and proceeded to empty it. It contained Bank of England notes to the amount of about nine hundred pounds. These he folded into convenient bundles, and placed in a money belt, which he then put on. After that he put the empty cash-box back into the safe. "Poor Charles," he said, "there's not much to marry on there. It really seems a pity, for Charles is a very decent fellow—as decent a fellow as I know."

He locked the safe, and pocketed the key. After that he once again took out of his breast-pocket the letter which had given him so much trouble, and then for the first time observed that the envelope, having been only slightly gummed, had not been torn in the opening. This circumstance seemed to please him, and he re-gummed and closed it carefully. When he had unplugged the keyhole and unbolted the door he was nearly ready.

"Williams," he called out as he proceeded to put on a light summer overcoat, "Williams, I want you."

The clerk appeared hurriedly, with a pen behind each ear, and another in his hand, to signify how busy he had been when called.

"I am going to Margate to-night by steamer from London Bridge, and I shan't be back till the day after to-morrow," said Garstang; "the boat starts at five—now I want you to take a cab to my chambers, and bring me the black dressing-case out of my bed-room, and the rug from the sofa. Then you will drive down to the wharf and meet me on board the Margate boat. You should be there by half-past four at latest. Look sharp."

Williams was gone like lightning; this was a task after his own heart; he was not unused to such tasks, and he delighted in them greatly. When he was gone, Garstang came slowly out of the office, locked the door, and looked around dingy Austin Friars for the last time. He ought probably to have felt a twinge of regret and remorse, but he didn't. He only thought it was a nuisance to have to go at a moment's notice in this way, and then congratulated himself on being prepared for any possible emergency.

"No hurry, no flurry, no nonsense," he said to himself with intense satisfaction, "Everything goes like clockwork. That's what it is to have forethought."

He dropped Harbottle's letter through the slit of the door into his own letter-box. "Williams will take that out when he gets back," he reflected, "and poor old Charles will find it on my desk to-morrow morning. Then he will wait quite contentedly for me to return from Margate. That's luck—merely luck, but the rest has been forethought; and the one often follows the other."

At twenty minutes past four Williams, hurrying on board the Margate boat, duly loaded with rug and dressing-case, found his employer waiting for him close by the gangway, and was thanked for his care and promptitude.

"Keep in the office as much as you can while I'm away," said Garstang, "and tell anybody who calls that I shall certainly be back the day after to-morrow."

When Williams was out of sight, Mr. Garstang seized his dressing-case, shouldered his rug, forsook the Margate boat, and hailing the first hansom he saw, was driven swiftly to King's Cross, where he booked for Liverpool.

Next morning as he sat at his breakfast in the hotel, the head-waiter in awestruck tones informed him of a fearful catastrophe which had occurred in the Thames on the previous evening. There had been a collision, and a large passenger steamer had been sunk in five minutes. The loss of life was estimated in hundreds—only two or three had escaped; the head-waiter's appetite for breakfast had been quite spoiled by the ghastly particulars which filled the columns of the morning papers.

Garstang thought the waiter a talkative fool, but he said to himself, "If I snub him he may remember my face," so he assumed an interest he did not feel, and asked the name of the sunken steamer.

When the head-waiter replied that it was the *Fairy*, bound for Margate, Garstang did not bound from his seat, or turn pale or red, or do anything that the novel-reader would expect of him; but he sat and stared at the man till he could not see him; and the food he had in his mouth seemed suddenly turned into ashes and dust.

"Bring me a newspaper," he said at last.

"Now that's not luck, and that's not foresight,"

said Mr. Garstang to himself solemnly, as he put the paper down, "that's Providence. Jack Garstang my boy you are drowned. You needn't worry about pursuit now, you can go your way calmly and without fear. Solomon or somebody says that the day of a man's death is better than the day of his birth, and by Gad I'm inclined to agree with him. If my passage were not taken in the *Atlantic* I should be much tempted to stay for a day or two, and have a look over Liverpool, but perhaps it's best as it is."

At a quarter to twelve he was smoking a cigar on the deck of the *Atlantic*, looking over his fellow-passengers, and inspecting the piles of luggage, with a serene feeling that he was quite comfortable, and ready to start at any moment.

"Nothing scamped," he said to himself, "every-thing done thoroughly—that's what makes me so easy now. I had a good mind to tell Williams I was going to Margate, and let that do; but I reflected how important it was that everything should be well done, and that Williams's idea upon the subject should be very clear, and now I reap my reward. He will be absolutely certain that I cannot have escaped."

And so, with no other feeling than one of great self-satisfaction, Mr. John Gregory Garstang bid adieu to his native land.

Three days after the loss of the *Fairy*, Maggie Sacheverell received the following letter from Charles Harbottle:—

"My dearest Maggie,—I have lost all I ever had in the world. It seems that my cousin, to whom I confided my money for investment, has embezzled every half-penny. There is no possibility of reparation or recovery, or even of revenge. He was drowned in the *Fairy* on Friday last, and his body has been identified by his confidential clerk. I know you well enough to be sure you would share my poverty with me if I asked you, but I am not so selfish as that. I am going to begin life over again with what heart I may. I shall see neither you nor Hilbury for many years. Forget me. Nobody knows what has passed except our two selves; let it all be as if it had never been."

"C. H."

Hilbury disquieted itself in vain about the disappearance of young Harbottle; his own mother didn't know where he was, poor old lady. Such things had been known in the village before. Young Richards had bolted, and was never heard of again; but then there were reasons. Harbottle was such a steady young fellow, "thoughtful-like," as somebody remarked. It was very strange to everybody except Colonel Sacheverell and his daughter. The former triumphed over his adversary the doctor, and said he knew how such fellows as Harbottle ended. The latter did not mention his name any more.

CHAPTER III.

BACK AGAIN.

A YOUNG man sat in the coffee room of the principal hotel in Portadown, county Armagh, and turned listlessly the advertisement sheet of the *Times*. He was waiting for a man who was trying to drive a bargain with him for some pigs. It was market-day in Portadown, and the place was

full of clamour and bustle; through the open windows of the coffee room came a Babel of sounds, but the young man seemed to take little notice of them, or indeed of anything else. All at once he dropped the paper as if it had stung him, and said, "By Gad!" Then he rang the bell in a great hurry, and ordered pens, ink, paper, and postage stamps, and began to write a letter.

Before he had finished, the man who wanted the pigs appeared, but the writer excused himself until the letter was done and ready for the post; then he concluded the sale of the pigs in five minutes, received a deposit, wrote a receipt, took up the *Times* again, and having copied an advertisement from the agony column into his pocket-book, went away.

"It would be strange," he said to himself as he made his way to the station, "if I got my money back again in this way." He took the pocket-book out, and read again what he had copied, which was as follows:—

"Gregory Garstang, late of Calcutta, deceased. Relatives are requested to communicate with Price and Martin, Solicitors, Old Jewry, E.C."

He shut the book with a slap.

"That's the old man, there can be no doubt of it," he said decisively. "Jack was named after him, and always thought he should come into some money when the old fellow died; said he was suspected of being a bit of a miser, and so on; rubbish, I suppose."

He went home with a strange look of hope on his face. Strange, indeed, and no wonder; he had been a farm-bailiff in Ireland for three years, and people were always shooting at him from behind walls and hedges. He was not likely to make a fortune, even if he continued to escape; but the tenantry were improving in their musketry practice, and he did not think he need bother himself much about the future. He lived two or three miles from the nearest town, and he mingled with his fellow creatures once a week, when on market-day he visited Portadown. He was rather reckless, and entirely hopeless; he did not see a chance of making his life worth anything to himself or anybody else. His mother was dead, and the farm was being carried on by his younger brother for the benefit of the children. He heard little or nothing from Hilbury now, but he knew that the colonel was married, and was the father of a boy, and that Maggie had left his house and gone to live with a maiden aunt at Leamington.

No communication had passed between them since that letter of adieu. She had not tried to find him, she had forgotten him; women were like that, he said to himself bitterly. He had a quarrel with all the world; Garstang's perfidy had soured him altogether, and he had the reputation of being a grim, hard, pitiless man, besides being more difficult to shoot than a snipe.

Price and Martin's reply to Harbottle's letter, which was duly received by return mail, was of a character to turn the brain of an ordinary mortal. Gregory Garstang's property was very large, it was not known as yet exactly how large, and he had left it all to his god-son John Gregory Garstang and his heirs for ever. Failing him and his heirs, however, it all went to Charles Harbottle. The lawyers thought that Charles had better call upon them at once, and as may be readily supposed he did not lose any time in doing so.

There is no necessity to dwell upon the formalities which had to be gone through; suffice it to say that in six months from the date of the *Times* advertisement Charles Harbottle, instead of being a humble farm-bailiff in Ireland, was one of the richest men in London.

But there is a drop of gall in every cup, we are told, and Harbottle's was big enough to spoil the flavour of the entire beverage. Maggie Sacheverell, deeply wounded at his sudden departure, and even more at his three years' silence, absolutely declined to have anything to do with him. He tried to amuse himself, he went into society, he bought horses and pictures, and a desirable family mansion; he had a special train when he wanted to go anywhere, but all to no purpose.

He had a great mind to marry a nobleman's daughter just to spite Maggie, and he would probably have done so if he hadn't come to the conclusion that by such a proceeding he would spite himself most.

Things went on thus for nearly a year, when one foggy autumn afternoon a disreputable looking man called at Price and Martin's office, and asked to see one of the partners. He was not the kind of man who is allowed to see partners without demur. He was cross-examined by the junior clerk, and then handed over to a brisk young man, who wanted him to state his business, as the partners were busy.

The red-nosed, blear-eyed, miserable looking wretch drew from a ragged pocket a dirty number of the *Times* newspaper, and pointed to the Garstang advertisement. "I'm a relation," he said huskily.

"Daresay," replied the clerk, looking him over superciliously, "but this affair's closed."

"Then it will have to be re-opened," observed the disreputable one with entire calmness, "I'm John Gregory Garstang, god-son of this gentleman, and, as I believe, his rightful heir."

"Well, you'll allow me to remark," returned the clerk blandly, "that for a man who has been dead and buried so long, you are looking exceedingly fresh and well."

"I know—I know," said the visitor with impatience, "I shall have to prove it, but I can do it. Let me see one of the principals, and I'll soon show him that I'm not dead."

"I consider you have shown that already," replied the clerk, "but I don't see how it does your case any good. John Gregory Garstang was drowned in the *Fairy*, so he is dead, and if you want to personate him, you'd better go and die too."

"You are insolent," said Garstang, "let me see one of your employers."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," retorted the other, "you are an impostor, and if you don't get out of this office, I'll have you turned out."

"When I've got my rights, I'll make you repent this," said Garstang savagely, "I'll let you know who I am."

"You see," said the clerk, "if you were John Gregory Garstang—which you are not—your 'rights' would include a term of penal servitude for embezzlement."

"Nothing of the kind," cried the other; "appearances were against me, but I'm ready to explain everything and to make full restitution. Who's got my money now?"

"I can't waste any more time over you," said the clerk. "Roberts, show this gentleman out."

The stalwart messenger touched Garstang on the shoulder, and out he went. He had led a fearful life since he left England; he was prematurely aged and broken down, even this little scene had exhausted him, and he was obliged to take a strong dram before he was even able to walk to his wretched lodgings in Whitechapel.

Next day he came again, but pursued different tactics; he waited by the street door for one of the partners, and after making several mistakes he captured Mr. Price. But it was of no use; before he had got half-way through his story, Mr. Price stopped him with, "Oh, yes, I have heard of you. If you have any business with me you must approach me through your solicitors. I have nothing to say to you;" and then he hailed a cab and was gone before Garstang could reply.

The miserable wretch tried one or two firms of solicitors after this, but he had no money, he was a dreadful object, he smelt of liquor, and he told a wildly improbable tale. Nobody would have anything to do with him, and he was in actual danger of starvation when an idea struck him. It must be Harbottle who had inherited all the money, and if so, Price and Martin must know his address. Warned by his former failures he gave a sharp-looking boy a shilling to go into the office and inquire for it. The ruse was entirely successful, and five minutes afterwards, with an expression of triumph on his face, he was on his way to the address given, as fast as his tottering limbs could carry him.

Next day Harbottle called upon Mr. Price early in the morning. Without any preface he said simply—

"Mr. Price, John Gregory Garstang was not drowned in the *Fairy*. He called upon me yesterday, and I wish to restore his inheritance to him as soon as I possibly can."

"Oh, that's ridiculous," exclaimed the lawyer; "the man's a drunken impostor. Bless you, it's only a try on."

"My dear sir," said Harbottle, "he was with me for two hours yesterday, and I did all I could to prove him a swindler; he couldn't have deceived me; we were on the most intimate terms for a dozen years; he is John Gregory Garstang as surely as I am Charles Harbottle. The man I buried at Kensal Green was identified by Williams, but the face was unrecognizable, and there's no doubt Williams made a mistake."

"Then lay the rascal by the heels for embezzlement," suggested the lawyer.

"It is not to be thought of," replied Harbottle, "as things have turned out, to do that now would be more discreditable to me than to him. He offers me full restitution, and that is all I can or will accept from him. I don't want to see him any more; I am leaving town to-day—there is my address. I leave you to carry out my wishes as soon as you possibly can."

There was no more to be said; the lawyer bowed, and Charles withdrew. He went straight to Leamington, and had an interview with Maggie's aunt.

"I have two or three words to say to your niece," he said, "but as she refuses to see me, you must kindly take my message. I am a comparatively poor man again. I am going to buy

the farm we thought of taking years ago. I have come to the conclusion that I was quite wrong in not trusting Maggie when I lost all my money before; and now you see I have learned wisdom. If she will listen to me now, I can only offer her the position of a farmer's wife. My money has gone as quickly as it came. If she will not listen, she need not fear that I will ever trouble her again."

"I will send her to you," said the old lady; "I am inclined to think her feelings towards you have undergone some modification lately."

Harbottle's heart beat horribly as he waited; he felt that this was his last chance; if he failed now, he would never try again. "Some modification" might mean anything or nothing, and besides, at best, what was an old maid of seventy to know about a girl of two-and-twenty?

Maggie entered the room, and stood for a moment irresolutely by the door. "Aunt tells me you have lost all your money," she said. "Oh, I am so sorry! But I have a great deal—a thousand pounds that is all my own—and it is of no use to me."

Harbottle's look of surprise melting gradually into amusement, stopped her.

"You disagreeable old thing!" she exclaimed, "why didn't you write to me once in all those three years?"

That same evening, as Price and Martin's brisk young clerk turned out of Old Jewry into Cheap-side, he ran against Garstang, who was dressed in new clothes, and was smoking a big cigar. The young clerk also perceived that he was in an advanced stage of intoxication.

"I was waiting for you," said Garstang thickly. "I'm John Gregory Garstang. You wouldn't believe me, but I'm to have all the money. You insulted me—never mind, I forgive you. Come and have a drink."

Now the young clerk had heard nothing of the turn affairs had taken, and it suddenly occurred to him that he would have what he called a "lark" with this wretched creature.

"Come with me," he said, "I have something important to show you."

Garstang followed him with sodden docility, and they got into a passing bus. The clerk lived at Kilburn; this little joke of his would not incommod him in any way. They went so far that Garstang at length fell into a drunken sleep, and did not wake until the clerk roughly shook his shoulder, saying, "Come along, old Fireworks." Then he got out, and followed his conductor, muttering something about being very thirsty.

They had stopped opposite the main entrance of a large cemetery, and into this city of the dead the clerk led him, threading the tortuous paths as deftly as if he came there every night. He stopped near a small plain gravestone, in an obscure and shaded corner.

"You are John Gregory Garstang, ain't you?" he asked.

"I've proved it," exclaimed his companion with exultation; "I've proved it, and I'm to have the money."

"Well, that's where you were buried four years ago," replied the clerk, pointing to the stone. "Read it."

Garstang looked first at him and then at the

grave. There was a stupid wonder in his drunken stare.

"What d'ye bring me here for?" he asked angrily. "Let me go."

The clerk shrugged his shoulders. "I thought you'd like to inspect your little property," he said. "I meant it kindly."

At this moment the name on the stone caught Garstang's eye.

JOHN GREGORY GARSTANG,
Died June 12, 18—.

He sat down on the grave, and proceeded to inspect it closely. "That's my name," he remarked turning his head.

The clerk nodded. "This is your grave," he replied.

"Who's inside?" asked Garstang, after a pause.

"Don't know," answered the clerk. "They put you in some few years ago, but you seem to have got out again."

Garstang rose and walked solemnly round the grave, then he came to the headstone again, and eyed it thoughtfully. "It's odd," he said, "it is my grave and no mistake. I wonder if its warm and dry? I'm subject to rheumatics."

The clerk was in fits, his little joke had succeeded beyond his expectations; but it was his dinner-time now. "Come along," he said, "we must be off."

Garstang stared. "You may go," he replied, "I'm going to stay here."

Persuasion was useless. "This is my grave," he reiterated, "and here I'll stay. Its my right, and its my duty. Its every man's duty to stick to his own grave." So at last the clerk left him to be turned out as he supposed when the time of closing came.

But somehow this did not occur, and Garstang was found on the grave next morning, quite dead and cold. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat, and hung them upon the gravestone; his watch was wound up and placed near his head as if he had thought of putting it under his pillow; his boots were standing together at the side of the adjacent pathway to be cleaned in the morning.

So Maggie married a rich man after all.

SONNET.

THROUGH the broad heaven the placid Queen
of Night
In tranquil beauty takes her radiant way,
And seas' and rivers' tides doth gently sway;
Yet when behind dark clouds her lambent light
Is lost, or in the noonday's ardour bright
Of her sweet loveliness no silver ray
Rejoices earth, the currents still obey
Her influence, as though the same soft might
Still made them ebb and flow. Thus hath the true
And steadfast soul ever the self-same pow'r,
Whether life's sky be flushed with rosy hue
Of fair prosperity, contentment's hour;
Or changeth suddenly the smiling view,
And fell adversity's dark storm clouds low'r.

H. C. S.

EDIBLE BIRD-NESTS.

OUR readers may be interested in the following brief account of some recent investigations, made by an English naturalist, of the wonderful caves of Gomanton, in British North Borneo, whence the highly esteemed and valuable bird-nests, from which the Chinese make a delicious, gelatinous soup, are obtained. It is related, in the Japan *Gazette*, that Mr. H. Pryer, with a companion, some natives, a Japanese collector, and a Chinese cook, proceeded in a steam launch down the Sapugaya river, intent on solving the mystery hitherto surrounding the production of edible nests. The banks of the river were lined for many miles with mangrove trees, growing on trestles formed by their own roots. Having passed these, the nipa swamps were reached. The nipa is described as being a gigantic fern, the fronds of which occasionally attain a length of thirty feet, and which bears a large fruit, weighing some twenty pounds, and resembling a pine-apple in shape. The natives use the nipa leaves for their walls and roofs. Above the river banks a dense forest extends, many of the stems of the trees being perfectly smooth until within two hundred feet, when the first branches commence. Ferns, orchids, and numbers of curious parasitical plants grow on these branches; owing to the impossibility of any number of plants thriving in the shade of the forest, most of them migrate to the tops of the trees in quest of light and air.

The travellers passed the night in a shed, covered by nipa leaves, or *ataip*, the primitive flooring of which was formed by a layer of sticks loosely placed over a frame-work of poles, and raised six feet from the ground. In the night there was a sound resembling rain; this was caused by heavy dew-drops, condensed in the tops of the lofty trees, and which pattered down, as the air became warmer, towards daylight. The following morning the party set out for a five hours' walk through the forest, where they had an occasional shot at deer, or outrang-outang, and observed the freshly made tracks of elephants. Argus-pheasant, kingfishers, and curlew were abundant; other less agreeable "finds" beset their path, in the shape of leeches, which were exceedingly troublesome, crawling down into the travellers' boots, and otherwise molesting them. The track was found to be tolerably level, and intersected by several small streams, which, however, had dried up into mere pools, tenanted by three distinct species of fish, which were remarkably fearless. These fish nibbled at the fingers directly a hand was placed in the water. In the forest various land shells were found, some of about two inches in length, which were of a brilliant emerald colour.

At noon they reached their destination, coming suddenly in the dense forest to the foot of a sheer limestone cliff, nine hundred feet high, in which the Gomanton caves are situate. A narrow path led directly into the entrance of *Simud Itan*, the Black Cave. The opening is a hundred feet wide, by two hundred and fifty high, the roof slopes considerably higher; in all, this superb temple of Nature stands three hundred and sixty feet high. There are two large circular openings in the roof, that on the right hand being about two hundred yards from the entrance on the right, and the smaller is on the left hand. The interior is

rugged, and shaded by prismatic colours, from pale yellows, greys, reds, greens, violets, to dense black; the blue sky and sunshine gleaming beyond through the openings, formed a picture of surpassing grandeur and beauty. Flying far above the spectators' heads were hundreds of birds, and at enormous heights nests were seen in clusters, attached to the sides and roofs. Here and there, from perilously lofty positions, hung the rattan stages, ladders, and ropes of the nest-collectors. Indeed, until the mystery was solved by ascending the cliff from the outside, and by finding many smaller caves connected with the roof of *Simud Itan*, it seemed impossible for the Malays to have scaled these heights, unless they, too, possessed wings like the swifts.

After an ascent from the outside of the cliff, of nearly four hundred feet in the ardent sun, the mouth of the White Cave, *Simud Putih*, was reached. This cave is the principal home of the swifts, and they were flying in and out in clouds. Here most of the nest-gatherers live, under a guard of the Company's soldiers. During the ascent of the cliff the Japanese collector had captured a fine grey and white snake, six feet in length. This "specimen" was regarded by the Malays with superstitious horror. They insisted it was poisonous, until Mr. Pryer, with the imperturbable *sang-froid* of a true-born Insular permitted the reptile to bite him, in disproof of the assertion.

After a brief rest, the naturalist started anew, to discover the material of which the edible nests were formed, expressing surprise that this should have been considered so mysterious. He informs us the nests are made from a soft fungoid growth, that encrusts the limestone in damp, warm places. This fungoid is of a dark brown colour outside, and a pure white inside; it grows about an inch in thickness. The birds build Sarong Itam, i.e., black nests, from the outside, and the best quality, Sarong Putih, white nests, from the inside. It is taken by the swift in its beak, and drawn out in a thin filament from right to left, until the exquisite, gelatinous nest is woven.

At about five in the afternoon, the marvellous spectacle of the ingress of the swallows to roost in the cave, and the nocturnal egress of millions of bats, was witnessed. These latter ascended from the depths of the cavern in spiral flight; having flown to a certain height, detachments of some thousands broke from the main body, and took to flight with great rapidity, and later they poured away in continuous succession, until long after darkness had set in. Just before six the swifts commenced going into *Simud Putih*; firstly in comparatively small numbers, then in hundreds, and lastly in uncountable numbers. At midnight they were still flying in. Two species of birds prey upon these bats and swifts—*Haliaster Indus*, an ordinary kite, having white heads and breasts, and chocolate coloured wings; and a scarce hawk, *Macharamphus alcinus*.

These marauders swoop down into the mouth of the caves, as their victims ascend or descend in diurnal flight. At daybreak the swifts emerge, and the bats return home, literally pouring into their chasm for two hours after sunrise.

These bats were found to be all of one species, having long, narrow wings, and the caudal membrane extending half way only to the tail. From the summit of the cliff a superb view is obtained

of the surrounding country. There were miles of dense forest, the outlines of which were intercepted by lofty mountains; towards the north the sea lay glittering, the beautiful bay of Sandakan and its lovely islands formed a panorama of loveliness. In a direct line Eloura could be discovered by aid of a glass, twenty miles distant. On the summit of this cliff a dwelling is erected, where the natives exhibit some fine specimens of white nests, taken from a contiguous chasm connected with Simud Putih, 116 fathoms in depth. One or two hundred feet below the top of the cliff is a large archway, leading into the interior of the cavern, which the party proceeded to explore. The footing was precarious, owing to guano deposits, which also rendered the air hot and oppressive. When a distance of more than 500 feet had been penetrated, a ray of light was discerned, struggling feebly from the top of the cavern, 696 feet above. One of the Malays thrust a long spear up to its hilt in the guano, in an endeavour to sound its depth, but this proved useless. The twittering of the innumerable birds makes an incessant noise, resembling that of an incoming sea.

The *modus operandi* of nest-gathering is as follows:—A rattan ladder is fixed against the sides of the cavern, on which two men take their stand; one holds a light, four-pronged spear, with a lighted candle fastened below the prongs. With a dexterous jerk he detaches the nests from the rock, and hands them on the spear to his coadjutor, who places the spoils in a pouch suspended from the waist. The caves have yielded three harvests of nests annually, for seven generations, at an estimated value of £5,000 per annum. Accidents amongst these nest-collectors are rare. The guano deposits are exceedingly rich, and the supply is practicably inexhaustible.

E. GOATLEY.



TWO LIVES.

BY COULSON KERNAHAN, F.R.G.S.

I DREAMT that your spirit and mine, dear,
Like melody mingling with song,
Might make but one music divine, dear,
One soul to each bosom belong.
I dreamt that as brooklets combine, dear,
And blend in one billowy breast,
The streams of our lives might entwine, dear,
Till 'bove us the day-star should shine, dear,
Before us the Ocean of Rest,
The still, silent Ocean of Rest.

I dreamt—but I woke from my dreaming,
Ah! chill, cruel pain at my heart!
The light in those soft eyes that's beaming
Cuts keen as a knife, or a dart!
And you—ah, you smiled! little deeming
The madness that burnt in my brain;
Nor saw where the red blood was streaming,
Where the blade of the dagger was gleaming;
You smiled—for you knew not my pain,
My anguish and torture and pain!

I dreamt—but my dreamings have fled, dear,
I know that your soul from mine own,
Stands far as you moon overhead, dear,
From waters that murmur and moan;
Stands far as the living from dead, dear,
Stands far as the night from the day;
Stands far as if 'twixt us there spread, dear,
An ocean of darkness and dread, dear,
A mountain of chill ice, and grey,
That parts us, and thrusts us away.

For yours is a soul that is strong, love,
And you can do naught but the good;
But I can do naught but the wrong, love,
And I am a creature of mood.
The toil, and the tumult, and throng, love,
Make discord and jar of my life;
But you have set yours to a song, love,
With music deep-sounding, and long, love;
But mine is a spirit at strife,
A spirit that struggles in strife.

And you, in your strength, calm and cold, dear,
Scarce dream of my spirit's mad throes;
Of the cloud-hidden heights I behold, dear,
The longings this wild bosom knows.
But ah! 'tis a torture untold, dear,
Earth-fettered, to strain to the skies,
To drag in the world-mire and mould, dear,
White pinions God gave to unfold, dear;
To struggle and pant to arise,
Yet fail with a hand on the prize.

And yet, though your spirit and mine, love,
Are far as the east from the west;
Shall never like brooklets combine, love,
To blend in one billowy breast:
Yet the stream of my life, and of thine, love,
Both flow to the Ocean of Rest,
And there, when the day-star shall shine, love,
Our spirits may meet and entwine, love,
My soul to your soul stand confes't,
In the still, silent Ocean of Rest.



THE SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY AT BIRMINGHAM.—The Shakespeare Library at the end of 1884 contained 6,734 volumes, which have thus nearly replaced those lost by the fire as to number, while as to importance and value, they very far exceed those which had been collected between 1864 and 1879. Of these books, the English (including 228 editions of the complete works of Shakespeare) form 3,887 vols.; German, 1847; French, 492; Italian, 147; Russian, 62; Dutch, 85; Hungarian, 45; Spanish, 31; Swedish, 32; Danish, 29; Polish, 22; Bohemian, 20; Greek, 14; Finnic, 7; Icelandic, 5; Portuguese, 5; Croatian, 2; Friesic, 2; Hebrew, 2; Latin, 2; Flemish, 1; Roumanian, 1; Roumelian, 1; Swedish, 1; Ukraine, 1; Wallachian, 1; and Welsh, 1—a polyglot collection not surpassed, or even equalled, by the translations of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Robinson Crusoe*, and only surpassed by the translations of the English Bible into foreign tongues.—SAM. TIMMINS.

THE MYSTERY OF COMPTON PLACE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

BY LAURA VALENTINE,

Author of "A Puzzle for the Police," "The Knight's Ransom," &c. &c.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY.

Gladys clasped her hands in passionate entreaty. Mr. Clifford and I exchanged looks of alarm and surprise.

"We will ask you nothing more about it at present," he said gently.

"Nor ever! promise me! If you do, I may not answer." And she trembled violently.

"Gladys," he said gravely, "I do not understand you. Have you given a promise not to tell what you have seen here?"

Her face, of pale mute anguish, answered him.

"It is most extraordinary," said the young clergyman, looking anxious and uneasy, "but of course, if you have given a promise, you cannot break it."

He drew me on one side.

"She must have found burglars here," he said in a low voice, "and they have extorted a promise of silence from her. We had better get away from the house as soon as possible, and I will return afterwards with the police. The door was open, you see, and the key is in it."

I thought this the most likely explanation of Gladys's fear and reticence; but I shuddered at the danger to which she had been exposed—my little darling Gladys! Mr. Clifford went back to her.

"Come, mysterious child," he said, with affected playfulness, "you will be better in the open air. Let me see if you can walk with my help."

He assisted her to quit the sofa, while I went to look for her hat, which lay where she had fallen, at the foot of the stairs.

Then gradually, leaning on the young clergyman's arm, she managed to walk across the hall and down the avenue. Outside the lodge gates, Mr. Clifford made her rest on the turf again, till she was able to get to our original seat.

What we should have done without his help I cannot imagine!

Seated once more beneath the beech-tree, he insisted on our having some lunch; and by degrees Gladys's colour returned to her pale cheeks, and she declared that she was quite able to go home; indeed, she appeared anxious to get away from the neighbourhood of the Place, glancing frequently and fearfully round as we sat eating our cakes.

On our way home she succeeded in extorting a promise from us both that we would not tell Aunt Ella of her illness, declaring that it would make her very unhappy if we did. I yielded a very unwilling consent to this request; but after all, if she could not explain the mystery, it might be better not to subject her to Aunt Ella's questioning.

On reaching the Dower House she complained, with perfect truth, of a headache, and Mrs. Drury—blaming me for walking too far in the heat—

sent her off to bed. John Clifford had left us at the gate, with the purpose, as I was aware, of returning to Compton Place, and fathoming, if possible, Gladys's mystery.

From that day Gladys was completely changed. She lost all her spirits, was silent and grave, and so timid that a sudden sound made her start and tremble. She became pale and listless, and would not walk beyond the grounds. Aunt Ella, alarmed, sent for the doctor, who gave her a tonic, but could do little for her. To him, in confidence, I related the fright she had had in Compton Place, and her persistent refusal to speak of it. He was interested, but puzzled.

"No doubt," he said, "she saw some trespassers in the Place—gypsies perhaps, from the old woman's face you mentioned—and they have bound her to secrecy by threats. Her nerves have received a severe shock, my dear Miss Lee, and she ought to have change of air and scene."

Keeping my secret, he gave this last advice to Aunt Ella, who promised to take my sister to the seaside as soon as her brother had paid his promised visit, and taken off his eldest daughter.

And this promise seemed to cheer Gladys greatly.

My father came at last, and at first Gladys was roused by the excitement of seeing him, but soon her old nervous timidity reappeared, and made me very uneasy.

Meeting John Clifford alone one day, I spoke to him of it. He tried to comfort me.

"She is quite a child," he said; "when she has been to the seaside she will be better, and will forget all about it. By-the-by, I could find no traces of any visitors (save ourselves) in the deserted Place, though the house had evidently been opened, and the key was left in the hall-door."

"I shall be dreadfully anxious about Gladys," I said wistfully.

"Let me write to you," he answered eagerly, "and tell you how she gets on. I promise you that I will watch over her for you."

I accepted this promise with gratitude, and perhaps also with a secret joy that there was an excuse for the young curate's writing to me.

CHAPTER III.

GLADYS'S LOVER.

At last the hour of parting came, and Gladys and I, with many tears, bade each other adieu. My father took me to Paris first, and we remained there a few months. I found my hitherto unknown stepmother a very pleasant, kind young woman, and my little sister's darling pets.

In the autumn we went to a charming villa my father had purchased in the Riviera.

Gladys wrote to me very often, but never, in any of her letters, named Compton Place; and occasionally John Clifford sent me a letter with cheering accounts of my little sister.

"She is not only a clever child," he told me, "but she is very high-principled and of strong character; capable, I believe, of the most entire self-devotion, and all her love is given as yet to yourself."

The years went on. We travelled a good deal; and I had several good offers, all of which, to my father's regret, I refused—for that girlish fancy for John Clifford had been kept alive by his letters, and I could love no one else. And yet I had no reason to believe that he loved me; he had given no sign of it. His letters were wholly of Gladys—of the village—of books that he wished me to read—of nothing else. Naturally our father and mother wished us to marry well, since we sisters had such small portions, but they were very good; they never urged their wishes when they saw that the suitor was unwelcome to me. Occasionally, however, Mrs. Lee would sigh and say that she hoped her daughters, when they were grown-up, would be less difficult to please—but, perhaps, they would be, "as they had less claim to beauty than Mabel had." Thus four years passed, and then the happy monotony of our life was broken—Aunt Drury died quite suddenly, and my father was summoned to the Dower House to attend his sister's funeral and to bring Gladys back with him. I must confess that the joy of expecting to have my sister once more with me, greatly mitigated my natural regret at our aunt's death.

My father wrote us a delightful description of Gladys (now seventeen). She was, he said, extremely beautiful, "even rivalling his Mabel."

Aunt Ella had left her small fortune to my father for his life, with the exception of two hundred a year to me, and three hundred to Gladys, her adopted daughter. The five hundred a-year willed to my father was also to go to Gladys at his death.

Very shortly afterwards the dear travellers arrived at the Riviera, and once more I clasped my darling in my arms. She was indeed lovely; no longer with the brightness of childhood, for she was in grief for the loss of her adopted mother, but with a solemn beauty in her soft blue eyes, and a touching droop of the rosy lips.

We resumed all our old loving ways, but Gladys was kind and tender to every one, and our step-mother and the twins quite idolized her. She enjoyed, also, the change of country and of climate, and revelled in the perfumes of the orange-groves and many fragrant flowers.

She had been with us about two months when one day my father announced a coming guest. He had just returned from paying a visit to an English neighbour, and he said as he entered the room—

"Helen, I have invited a gentleman to dine with us to-day *en famille*; we could not entertain him in any other way so soon after dear Ella's death."

"Who is he—a stranger?" asked Mrs. Lee.

"Well, yes, personally; but I knew his father very intimately in my youth, and I was glad to make his son's acquaintance to-day. My friend, Grimbald Lovel, was an artist, but he died young, and left his widow and son in great poverty. I tried to find them—they lived on the Continent—but I never succeeded. To-day, however, I was introduced to the young man at the Shaws, and recognised him from the likeness to his father, which is remarkable. I had a long chat with him, and asked him to dine with us."

"Is he also an artist?" asked Gladys.

"No; he paints well, but Mr. Shaw told me

that he has succeeded to a fine property within the last four or five years, and has therefore no occasion to adopt art as a profession.

Edmund Lovel dined with us that evening.

How well I remember our first meeting! We were sitting, Gladys and I, under some orange-trees in the lovely grounds surrounding our villa in the Riviera.

Gladys had her lap full of white and scarlet blossoms, which lighted up her black dress. Her hat lay on the grass at her feet, and the sunbeams of the declining day, stealing through the leaves, shone on her rich golden tresses. I had never seen her looking so lovely. She was making a bouquet to wear that evening of orange-blossoms and stephanotis. I remonstrated with her, when she added a sprig or two of jessamine to it, on the too powerful perfume of her posy, but she only laughed at me.

"No scents are too powerful for me," she said.

"I sympathise with Moore's Enchantress, who lived on inhaling the perfumes of flowers."

At that moment we saw our father approaching, accompanied by a tall, slight young man, who was of course our expected guest.

Papa introduced him as "Mr. Lovel" to me first; then to Gladys, on whom his eyes rested with a glance of mingled surprise and admiration.

As her eyes met his she suddenly blushed scarlet, and her lips parted as if to ask a question, but she checked herself, and did not speak. Our conversation with the stranger (or rather mine, for Gladys was silent) was merely conventional, of course, but I was struck by the melody of his voice, and by the unusual style of manly beauty he possessed. His features were perfect as a Greek statue's, his complexion dark, and his hair black; his eyes were splendid—a kind of golden brown, full of fire; and he wore a long silky beard—perhaps without it his face would have been too effeminately beautiful. Very soon after this introduction, my father reminded us that it was time for us to dress for dinner.

Mr. Lovel had come early by papa's request; we two returned to the villa.

"How handsome Mr. Lovel is!" I said to Gladys as we walked to the house.

"Yes," she answered; "but do you know I feel as if I had seen him before somewhere."

"You could not! He has been four years or more on the Continent, he said, and I am certain that he was never at Woodlands while I was there."

We dressed rather hurriedly, but Gladys did not forget to put her brilliant and sweet bouquet in her bosom—filling the air with its fragrance.

It chanced that her seat at table was between my father and Mr. Lovel, and as my eyes rested on them then side by side, I thought I had never seen so striking a pair of young people. Gladys, lily-like in her delicate beauty, tall and stately withal; and Edmund Lovel dark, with eyes of light, and features that looked as if they had been carved in marble.

Our father had a good deal to say to Mr. Lovel of his own former friendship with Mr. Grimbald Lovel; to which the young man listened with evident pleasure. Then he in turn gave us some account of his travels in the East; relating a few of his personal adventures with much graphic power.

The dinner went on; the dessert was on the table; the room, in spite of open windows, was very much heated, and the scent of Gladys's bouquet filled the air.

"I confess," said my father, "I was glad to hear of the death of that unfortunate boy—your uncle's son, by which you inherited the property. By-the-by, of what did he die?"

Lovel had suddenly turned very pale; he made an effort now to answer, but his lips trembled; he muttered an inarticulate something, and would have fallen to the ground had not Gladys supported him with her strong young arms.

My father rose and went to her, and bidding me ring the bell, I obeyed, and very soon the butler and papa had carried Mr. Lovel to a sofa, which luckily stood near the window. Then they sprinkled water in his face, while Gladys standing by his head fanned him with her white feather fan—an anxious, pitying expression on her fair face. He opened his eyes at last, and they met hers; but he closed them again with a swift shudder and a deep sigh. Suddenly it occurred to me that the illness might have been caused by the strong scent of her flowers, and I said, "Gladys, I believe the perfume of your bouquet has overpowered Mr. Lovel; give me your flowers."

She handed them instantly to me, and I threw them out of the window. As I turned back, I met Mr. Lovel's eyes fixed gratefully on me.

"Thank you," he said faintly, "it was the flowers, I think. I am sorry to have given so much trouble, but I have been ill lately. I am easily upset."

And he tried to rise from the sofa-pillow.

Why I never knew—it might be repugnance at such weakness in a man that caused it; but from that moment I took a dislike to Edmund Lovel.

Alas! Gladys, touched by pity for his evident delicacy, and the story she had heard from his own lips that day of his past life, learned from the same hour to love him.

My father, who could not conceive the possibility of a man fainting at a scent, unless he were very ill, absolutely refused to let Lovel return to, his hotel that night. He insisted on his staying with us a few days.

"It was not the scents," he said laughing, "that made you ill, Lovel. You have been upset by the hotel cookery; you will soon be quite well if you will remain a week or so with us."

And Mr. Lovel gladly accepted the invitation. He sent for his portmanteau and valet, and instead of one week, stayed two or three with us.

It was soon clear to me that he and Gladys lived only in each other's presence, though both believed their secret well concealed; in fact, no other member of the family did perceive it. My insight was, perhaps, quickened by my love for and anxiety about Gladys.

I had the greatest dislike to the idea of her marrying Edmund Lovel, whom I distrusted, without any reason for my distrust; only I had a vague instinct that it would be evil for her. Once or twice I acknowledged to her my repulsion to our guest; but I soon found that I only roused her indignation at my injustice, and caused her to champion his cause with greater earnestness. With a sad heart I used to watch the pair slowly sauntering amidst the roses in the lovely eventide—as often silent as speaking—happy enough in each other's mute presence.

The end came, of course. Lovel proposed to my father for Gladys, and as her consent had been already given, our parent's was not withheld. In fact, papa was delighted at the match; for Edmund Lovel had a fine place—nay, several places—in England, and at least twenty thousand a-year.

One of the almost portionless Lee girls was thus provided for; and Lovel refused to let my father give Gladys anything. She had her own three hundred a-year from Annt Drury settled on herself, her lover also settling on her five thousand a-year.

There was nothing but our present mourning to delay the marriage, and so, four months after their first meeting, Edmund and Gladys were united.

It is always sad (when two sisters have dearly loved each other) for one to marry and the other to be left, no longer holding the first place in her earliest friend's affections, no longer having an ever-present confidante and sympathiser. The blank felt is terrible. And to it was added—for me—a great fear, vague and apparently unjustifiable, as to the future fate of my darling.

My father had early in our acquaintance with Lovel made inquiries about his character with more than ordinary prudence, but he could learn little of the young man's past life.

Mr. Shaw told him that Mrs. Lovel had brought up her boy in great seclusion in Italy; then she had taken him to England, and placed him at an English school. How she had managed to pay for Edmund's education he did not know; he believed that she had taught music. At length, when Edmund was about nineteen, the death of a cousin and uncle caused him to inherit a large fortune, and he and his mother returned to Italy. Mrs. Lovel's native land; but the poor lady did not long enjoy her son's affluence; she died about a year after he came into his inheritance. Since then Edmund Lovel had been constantly travelling. Mr. Shaw knew little about him—except that he had been a most affectionate and devoted son. Surely there was good promise for Gladys's future happiness in that fact; and yet I could not help fearing I knew not what!

(To be continued.)

A BURIAL.

BRING me berries of the yew,
Dusky leaves and branches too;
Bring me cypress such as falls
On coffin-lids at funerals;
Bring me poppy-leaves of sleep
For the slumber long and deep;
Bring me ivy, laurel, bay,
Rose-wreaths twisted yesterday;
Bring me very many flowers
As a token of glad hours;
Let them lie, poor flowers, and wither,
One by one, and all together;
Bring me all old joys that be
Manifested visibly,
All the signs of grief that are
Fateful familiar;
Bring them all, and lay them here,
Branch and blossom green and sere:
I must bury as I may
A great hope that died to-day.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

ETIQUETTE OF THE FACULTY.

THE well-known scientist, Professor Huxley, who is himself a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, in order to illustrate the professional jealousy current in his younger days amongst rival members of the medical profession, once told the following story:—

"I remember," said he, "a great Court physician who was travelling with a friend, like himself, bound for a country house. The friend fell down in an apoplectic fit, and the physician refused to bleed him, because it was contrary to the etiquette of the profession for a physician to perform that operation."

Whether the unfortunate person died, or whether he got better in consequence of his friend's punctilious scruples, the Professor has omitted to say. There was also reported in the newspapers a somewhat similar story of a tradesman in a small country town who, being very ill, called in a certain practitioner, whom we will here call by the name of Jones, and who was resident in the vicinity. This gentleman came, saw his patient, prescribed for him, and left. The man getting rapidly worse, his friends became anxious for further advice, and sent for another doctor. The second medical man went to the patient's house, but withdrew immediately upon finding that Dr. Jones was in attendance. Dr. Jones was then again sent for, but when he heard of the other doctor's visit, he, too, refused to attend. No other medical man was willing to attend to the sick person, as etiquette forbade them, and the two doctors who had been already called in stood upon professional dignity till the unfortunate man died, and even then, it is stated, their silly scruples followed him after death, for neither would give a certificate, and an inquest had to be held on the body. Whether these stories are true or not, is of no consequence; the moral is the same. Professional etiquette, doubtless a very good thing in its way, when carried to the extent depicted has gone too far, and the time certainly come when one may well cry, "Hold, enough!" The fair amount of courtesy which should exist amongst gentlemen members of the same honourable profession in their relations with one another and the public is one thing, running professional etiquette into the grave another. The above anecdotes are of course illustrations of the abuse of these rules of courtesy. The Etiquette of the Faculty may be described as a code of unwritten laws which regulates, or should regulate, the relation or professional bearing of medical men, firstly, with regard to each other; secondly, with regard to their patients, and thirdly, with regard to the world at large or general public. To commence with the first heading, the relations of one medical man with another. Here the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto to you, do ye even so to them," holds good; and for this reason, no medical man, if he be an honourable gentleman, would credit any story of malapraxia on the part of a brother practitioner on anything but the strongest and most incontrovertible evidence. Or, take another case. What is more common than for dissatisfied patients to change their medical attendants upon the most frivolous pretexts? How should the fresh medical man

who is called in conduct himself when, as is very likely, he is called upon to express an opinion of his predecessor's course of treatment of the patient, so as to retain his own position without injuring or countenancing the putting a slight on the character of the doctor who had previously attended? Of course, in many cases he can decline to express an opinion. Often, however, he knows that the course of treatment adopted has been the right one, and then he should say so unhesitatingly. But even were it otherwise, he should abstain from making capital out of the mistakes of a brother practitioner, and in all cases endeavour to protect the reputation of an absent *confrère*.

So one member of the Faculty, in his conduct towards another, should always have regard to the general credit and good of the profession. He should do nothing which may tend to degrade or militate against the reputation of his calling in the eyes of the public. The relations of medical men with their patients are of course regulated by the rules of ordinary good breeding, but there are many other matters which arise extraneous to these. For instance, how far is a medical man to treat his patient as a confidant, and to what extent is he to accept the confidences of a patient? With regard to the former question, the solution may always be left to the doctor's discretion in each case as circumstances may demand; as to the latter, it would be as well if medical men were to avoid inviting them, for communications so made are not privileged, nor can they be withheld if asked for in a court of law; but should a medical man by any accident or necessity become the repository of such a confidence, the knowledge ought to be kept inviolate and secret, unless the laws of his country require him to speak. To continue, as a general rule, a medical man ought not to talk of the disease from which his patient is suffering to a third person, for much mischief is often wrought thereby. Besides, the nature of the complaint is the patient's own secret, and may not be revealed unless he wish it. The rank and position of his patient should make no difference to the medical man. Rich and poor should be alike equal in his eyes. The Faculty never has been a respecter of persons. Who does not remember the story of the French monarch who once, calling in the services of an eminent surgeon attached to the hospital of the Hotel Dieu, besought him to remember that he was not treating one of the miserable wretches at the hospital, and was met with the dignified answer—

"Sire, each one of those 'miserable wretches,' as your Majesty is pleased to call them, is equal to a crowned monarch in my eyes."

And so it should be now. The humble artisan, the wealthy merchant, and the titled peer merit the same care when brought face to face with the grim leveller, Death.

A question is sometimes raised as to the duty of a medical man to give timely warning to his patient of the approach of death. Though always encouraging a sufferer with the hope of recovery, he should surely not hesitate, when occasion requires it, to warn him or his friends of any imminent danger at hand. That it is the medical attendant's duty to give (when within his power) timely warning of the approach of dissolution

there can be no doubt, even if at the risk of accelerating the end; though the responsibility of coming to a decision upon these points is a very serious one, and must weigh heavily upon a conscientious man.

The subject of the Etiquette of the Faculty as it affects the profession and the world at large, is one not often dwelt upon, though the importance of it cannot be over-estimated. The custom (if such a breach of decorum can correctly be described as a custom) of medical men giving to particular tradesmen, in return for money or other payment, testimonials vouching for the hygienic value of certain proprietary medicines, which are immediately turned to pecuniary advantage by advertisement, is a gross breach of etiquette, and must be productive of evils which cannot be too highly reprehended. The same remark applies with equal force to a practice which unhappily appears to be on the increase amongst certain medical men—namely, advertisement by other than legitimate means, such as circulars, hand-bills, reports of successful cases in the local newspapers, and the like. A medical man, if he be young in his profession especially, should be very careful, as one step injudiciously taken in the beginning may be ruin to future professional success. Members of the Faculty, of all men, should be most careful to have their characters and actions alike unassailable.

In conclusion, with regard to homœopaths and the many other dissenters from the legitimate doctrines of the Faculty, medical men are of course free to adopt and practise each and every theory of medicine they choose; but they should be careful to abstain from assuming and advertising themselves under any special designation, as that action is opposed to the dignity of their great profession, and calculated to lower both themselves and their *confrères* in the estimation of the public.

J. G.

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LUTCHINA,
OR THE BLUE LAKE.
BY A. POKLINGTON.

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PART I.
CHAPTER VII.
THE FRAU GRÄFENN'S MISSION.

THINGS went on as usual after that till autumn waned, and a morning came when the ground was whitened with the first snow. Melchior's handsome face looked pinched and blue, but he laughed at his father's sallies, and said he had a mind to wait and see what a northern Christmas was like.

A flush of pain and anger swept up to Lutchina's brow, as she heard him say this, but paled again under the Baron's unconscious stab, for he turned on her, his face aglow with pleasure, and said—

"Lutchina, little witch, I read thy hand in this!" and kissed her. He loved his beautiful wife, but his heart yearned over his heir.

Jossi's face, when he heard the Count's decision, became such a study that his father called for Melchior to come and sketch it, but the old man was gone with a bound directly.

"I must let the foresters know," he cried joyously. "We will have such a wolf-hunt as we have not had for twenty years, Baron!"

And when the wolf-hunt came off, Melchior shook aside his drowsiness, and entered into its spirit with zest.

"Ah, ha!" laughed Jossi. "Did I not say that he would like the taste of winter? Patience wins everything, from a weasel to a woman."

"True," smiled Melchior darkly, as he overheard him.

And through all that merry time the Baroness pressed her hand to her aching breast, and said that she would bear with him, because the Baron loved him.

Melchior might read the trouble on her brow, perhaps amuse himself with it; she wondered sometimes that her husband did not. But the day came when he did so. In an evil hour the Baron made good his threat that Melchior should paint his wife's portrait.

Snow had been falling heavily for days. There could be no hunting, no going out into the bitter cold; he busied himself over his forgotten catalogue, and Melchior stood up in the gallery, and began to paint Lutchina. Sometimes they kept utter silence; sometimes Lutchina's pride melted before his reproachful gaze, and they talked like strangers; sometimes Melchior would relate his travels, as in the old days on the mill-hearth, till Lutchina's heart turned from ice to water, and she could have cried aloud in her pain. But one day in mid-winter the Baron came unperceived on his wife as she sat alone in a corner. Her hands trembled as they lay clasped together listlessly in her lap; the bloom seemed to have gone suddenly from her cheeks; in her eyes, as she gazed on the snowy landscape, was a look of mingled fear and trouble. Had she been aware of her husband's approach, he would have seen none of these things; but when she roused herself with a quick smile and rising colour to greet him, he had already put his arm about her and asked her what ailed her.

"I am well—I am always well," she answered, yet looking down and shivering a little.

The Baron sighed. Whatever weighed on her mind, he felt he was not to learn it at once.

"Lutchina," said he presently, "methinks the Schloss grows a little dull for thee. Women at times long for one of their own sex about them; and when Melchior and I are out hunting the day is tedious to thee. We will have good cousin Elizabeth to visit us."

"As you will, Baron," answered Lutchina faintly.

"Nay, nay—not as I will, loved one!" and the old man drew his wife's beautiful head to his breast and stroked her red-brown hair. "All that I have is thine, Lutchina, and thy will is mine. Speak but thy wishes, open out thy heart to me, and I shall be happy."

Tears struggled to Lutchina's eyes; for a moment a wild thought came to her that she would bid him urge Melchior's departure, and then she knew it was impossible. No such thing could be done—what reason could she name for so

strange a demand? The Baron and the household alike could not speak too much in praise of Melchior's courtly kindness to the new wife. His rich, deep voice fell on their ears now as he caroled a measure from some recess in the Schloss, and his father's eyes lighted at the sound.

Lutchina raised her head from her husband's shoulder.

"Thou art too good to me," she sighed, pressing his hands to her lips, "and I am not dull here. Yet might it be better were cousin Elizabeth to come."

When Count Melchior was told this lady had been invited to stay an indefinite time at the Schloss, he turned eyes that blazed with sudden anger on Lutchina. Then he laughed sharply.

"No matter," said he; "she will talk."

"She will talk us to death," laughed back his father; "still, she will cheer the wife when we rough fellows are in the forest."

When cousin Elizabeth arrived with her shrill tongue and innumerable packages, the cloud for a time seemed to be raised from Lutchina's spirits. Cousin Elizabeth was a tall, gaunt woman of fifty, who wore spectacles and stiff black dresses. She had shrewd eyes that were fine still and saw everything that went on around them, and beautiful hands covered with handsome rings. In their young days she and the Baron had been as brother and sister—they might have been something nearer—but they married—she an elderly Court physician, he the beautiful Francesca. And after that they quarrelled. Frau Elizabeth had no sentiment in her composition, and she could not understand his infatuation for the black Italian witch, as she called his wife, nor ever forgave him the rash promise made that wife on her deathbed.

"What! Send the child he designed as his heir to be educated amongst strangers in a strange land? It was scandalous!" She was the only woman left of the house of Wolfthurn, and had a right to storm at its male head.

But the Baron grew weary at the storming. "Peace, Elizabeth!" he cried; "thy tongue wags too much."

This was a speech no lady of the Frau Gräfinn's temperament could brook.

She had been keeping house for her bereaved cousin, but as soon as the child was gone she left him to return to her own home. After that the Baron commenced his wanderings in search of the curious; and though on the death of the Court physician he entreated the widow to resume her housewifely duties at the Schloss, she could not forgive him that testy speech, and excused herself. For twenty years they rarely met; and then on the Baron's second marriage they became good friends again. For he did wisely by telling her the whole truth concerning Lutchina, concealing nothing. "I throw myself on your mercy," said he.

The Frau had looked horror-stricken many times during the recital of his second love-marriage.

"Rudolf," said she at its conclusion, "thou art a greater fool than I took thee for!"

Then they were quits, and became quite friendly. Moreover, the Frau, knowing her kinsman, duly appreciated the trust reposed in her, for he was a proud man whose confidence it was not easy to win; and now he had laid himself and his wife

entirely in her hands. When Lutchina, shy and trembling, was brought before her, she stooped and kissed her, so struck for the moment was she by her loveliness and the pathetic beauty of her blue eyes. And then she set herself to the task imposed upon her by the Baron, and for two years Lutchina dwelt under her roof in the great city and learnt. She learnt new things willingly, but she could not unlearn the old—she could not forget. Nor could she grow to like the loud-voiced Gräfinn who disapproved entirely of the girl, and was not always at the pains to conceal it. "A peasant's daughter!" she would murmur to herself, putting her scented handkerchief to her nose; "such connections can but end miserably." And then her fine lip would curl with disdain at the thought of her cousin's *mésalliance*, albeit she admitted the peasant was more submissive and had a sweeter expression than that noble-born dame, the black Italian witch. Still, for the honour of her race, she took especial pains in the schooling and moulding of Lutchina, and at the end of the two years saw her step into the travelling-carriage, not without a sense of gratification at the result of her labours.

"God bless thee, Elizabeth! thou hast made me a happy man," said the Baron, kissing her. And something like a tear twinkled in the Gräfinn's eye; for she had a heart, though it was not always easy to find.

And now she was at the Schloss again, and became very good-humoured and happy. She installed herself very comfortably into her suite of rooms, and took up the reins of government where she had dropped them. Some people have a knack of doing this; and cousin Elizabeth was a clever woman, and prided herself upon her management of households and individuals. Almost imperceptibly the keys stole out of Lutchina's pocket into hers, and then she became virtually mistress, for keys are a badge of office. Lutchina never thought that she was doing unwisely. She was but a miller's daughter and the Gräfinn was a great lady and a good manager. Cousin Elizabeth was well pleased with her docility, and was so contented with her surroundings, as at first not to note the strange look of sadness in Lutchina's eyes, nor the veiled constraint in her intercourse with Count Melchior. But when she had settled down quite comfortably, almost as though she never meant to quit the Schloss again, she began to find time to look about her, and then her busy eyes quickly discovered an enigma on which to bend their utmost scrutiny. This was the exceeding courtesy and urbanity of Count Melchior's manner towards the Baroness. Most young men in his position would have shown some impatience at seeing their mother's memory supplanted in their father's affections; but Melchior was all honey and sugar. "What riddle is here? One would say he had a hidden meaning in every word, a word in every look," confided the lady to herself. And she determined to work out the puzzle, though it seemed no easy one on the surface.

Lutchina became only too quickly conscious of the unfriendly eyes that watched her outgoings and incomings, of the sharp ears that detected mystery in every whisper, of the softened rustle of the stiff black gown speeding upon her from unthought-of corners. It fretted, but made her

laugh too, and it also gave her a sense of protection. "Nothing can go wrong with cousin Elizabeth in the house," she said to herself, yet with a passing shudder.

The new year dawned, bringing with it no change outwardly other than increased severity in the cold and snowstorms; but within the Schloss a little change took place, a new element being introduced in the person of the Gräfin's maid, who followed her mistress within doors unannounced one day, and fixed her bold eyes in passing on Melchior's face. "You see, I pitied the poor girl," exclaimed the bustling countess. "As the sledge drove through the town, there she was seated on a doorstep crying. It seems her master, an innkeeper, was just dead, and that for want of work she was at the point of starving. I never let the grass grow under my feet, and seeing that she had the making of a good servant in her, I ordered her into the sledge at once. I will train her into a waiting-woman for Lutchina. The old creature she has about her does not know silk from satin."

Grutli was a girl of sense. The moment she perceived Count Melchior she knew him to be the shabby, wandering artist, who, four years before, had broken his fast at Max Bauer's inn; and in the Baroness, to whom she was speedily introduced by cousin Elizabeth, she quickly recognized Lutchina Graf, the miller's daughter. But she said never a word. As for Lutchina, Grutli being a new-comer in the district, she had not met to know her. And now she only said some kindly words of welcome, and then dismissed her, wishing that she might be permitted to robe herself, and that cousin Elizabeth was less fond of philanthropy.

Outside the door Grutli's eyes blazed. Still she held her peace, though she soon perceived none of the lower inmates of the Schloss knew the birth-name of their beautiful mistress. "Something will grow out of this," she said to herself.

So she waited patiently. But none the less did she let her black eyes fall on Count Melchior, till the hard boldness of their glances melted into looks of coy sweetness. Melchior, however, was blind to them; and Grutli grew to hate Lutchina because of her greater beauty, upon which the eyes of men fell so much the more readily.

CHAPTER VIII.

CROSS CURRENTS.

One warm day in early spring, the Baroness was seated at the edge of the Blue Lake. Overhead, the sky was blue, and the lake, another sky at her feet, shimmered in the golden sunshine. The snow was already melted from the forest paths; here and there a little flower, like a new-born babe, looked up and smiled; and from where in a far corner the rushes grew, a moor-hen swam across the lake, dimpling the waters with its tiny feet. The Baroness, lost in a dream, saw none of these things—she woke only from it on hearing her name called. Then she started up, the colour flaming in her cheeks and in her eyes a curious light. Matthias, for it was he, looked at her once, and then let his gaze drop aside, as though seeing what he should not see.

"You want something with me?" asked Lutchina sharply, like one taken unawares.

"The Baron gives me leave to come into his forests for wood," said Matthias, as though his presence there required explanation. "I am often in them. But to-day I saw you seated here, and I have something to tell you." He continued in a low tone and looking at his feet, whilst his hands worked nervously with his cap—"Baroness, I have made a discovery in the mill."

Lutchina looked at him with astonished eyes.

"It was two days since," resumed the miller, "I was making some repairs in the old place, and under the flooring of the room that had been your father's, I found a coffer."

"A coffer?" repeated Lutchina, like one whose thoughts were elsewhere.

"Yes, Baroness; and when I raised the lid, it was full of gold. I did not stay to count it, but within the coffer lies a great sum, doubtless."

"Well?" asked Lutchina, but now her face was white and she seemed to hold her breath.

"Frau Baronin, the money is yours."

"Yes, yes,—but how—my father, how came he to die rich? We were starving, Matthias, starving those last two years. Oh, what does it mean?"

She looked at the miller with eyes of such misery and bewilderment that he was forced to speak.

"I hardly know," he answered sadly; "doubtless thy father was careful of his money."

"Then when he died we were rich—rich enough to—" The Baroness paused, and buried her face in her hands. When she looked up again, her eyes glittered but she was calm.

"Matthias, I do not want this money. Keep it—keep it all."

"It shall go to the poor," said the miller.

"Yes—some of it. But use the rest, Matthias. It is gold alone that you need to make your models known, and he owed you much, my unhappy father."

Matthias looked away from her shamed face, and his own grew stern. "It shall go all to the poor," he repeated.

Lutchina said no more, but wandered back to the water, and Matthias, seeing she was too troubled to speak, turned and left the spot. As for Lutchina, she seated herself again and stared down into the strange depths beneath her like an image of stone. "Father," she murmured, "would I had died with you, for thou hast ruined my soul." And she sat thus, silent in her shame and misery, till one who was not Matthias nor yet the Baron stole across the soft spring grass to her side and comforted her. After that day one would have said the Baroness gave over struggling any longer. She laid her will, as it were, between Melchior's two hands, and let him do what he would with it. She spurned him no further, nor ever looked at him reproachfully, though she grew white and still, like one whose spirit is dead. None were quicker to note these things than cousin Elizabeth and the maiden Grutli. The Baron saw them not at all, and his blindness angered cousin Elizabeth beyond measure. "Surely there is no fool like an old fool," she would muse in a white heat, if she chanced to see Melchior and Lutchina walking together to the forest. "The Baron wants pap and a cradle again!"

"They are too much together!" she spoke out abruptly one day.

"Who are?" asked the Baron, losing his page at her exclamation.

"Those two." Cousin Elizabeth pointed through the window with her finger, and the Baron raised his head to look out.

"Oh, those two?" Lutchina and the Count were pacing side by side towards the garden.

"Well, why not?" asked the Baron.

The lady cast her eyes up to the ceiling with a murmured "Himmel!" after which she dropped them on her immaculate apron, and said, "It is highly improper."

"Improper? The one is my wife, the other my stepson."

"That is no relation." Cousin Elizabeth closed her frigid lips tightly as she said this, and looked at her cousin as one might look at an elderly-born baby. "You want spectacles, Baron," she said.

"Spectacles!" The Baron prided himself on his strong eyesight. "Tut!" said he, "some folk see too much through theirs."

The Countess said no more, but knitted furiously, and the Baron began to seek for his lost page. She noted, however, that he never found it, and when he rose soon after and left the room, she said to herself with a meaning nod, "He is beginning to think."

Nevertheless she was somewhat surprised when he presently returned, and said quietly, as he stood over her—

"You do not love my wife, Elizabeth."

A little colour warmed the pallor of the Countess's cheek.

"No," she said; "frankly I do not."

"She has displeased you?"

"She is giddy."

"And what else?"

"Beautiful."

"It is a sin, then, in your eyes for a woman to be beautiful?"

"A misfortune, when added to giddiness."

"And how is Lutchina giddy?"

"Use your eyes," answered the Countess, picking up dropped stitches with an impatient gesture.

The Baron looked at her a moment in silence, then left her.

Balmy days passed one by one till the glory of summer possessed the land. Melchior remained at the Schloss, and talked not of leaving it; neither did cousin Elizabeth. To be sure, her dresses grew stiffer, and her mouth more resolute. Melchior, on the other hand, seemed to expand. His moody silences were at an end; he talked and laughed as none had ever heard him before; his eyes, deep and inscrutable as a midnight sky, were full of a mysterious joy, which he did not try to veil.

"He is a new man," said Jossi to his master one day as the Count's fine form passed before them through the pines.

"And I am an old one," said the Baron, gazing after his son.

"No, no, Herr. You are twenty years younger, thanks to our handsome lady!"

"When the heart has lost its spring, one soon grows old, good Jossi," returned the Baron.

"What's amiss?" wondered old Jossi; but he did not ask it.

The Baron fell back much into his former routine that summer. He was to be seen constantly buried in black-letter books or wandering amongst his statues, dusting their cool feet. He seemed pleased when Lutchina was near him, but he did not speak with her much.

"He is using his eyes," said cousin Elizabeth.

One day she used her tongue. A smouldering fire that has been long hidden is the most terrible fire of all once it breaks into open flame. Cousin Elizabeth's tongue had been such a fire, and when it broke loose she could not have stayed it for her life.

On this morning the two women had been seated at work in the window of the big library—at least the Countess worked, for she knitted from morning to night with a rigid fixity that sometimes drove Lutchina half wild; but Lutchina herself was restless, and moved uneasily about the room like one who longed to leave it, yet dared not.

Presently the Countess, who saw everything in those days, noted Melchior making for the woods, and soon after Lutchina said she would put on her hat and go out with her husband; the Schloss was stifling.

"Your husband, girl?" Cousin Elizabeth, beside herself at this seeming duplicity, rose from her seat, and looked at the Baroness with eyes ablaze with scorn. "It is a lie. You are going out to be with one who is not your husband, but whom you would willingly have for such. Do not think that the forest can hide your iniquity from my eyes."

At first Lutchina was silent. She crossed her hands on her breast, and looked at the Countess, towering in virtuous indignation before her, with a face pale as marble. Then, wild with sudden passion, she retorted on her tormentor. What words they were she used she never knew, as cousin Elizabeth never forgot them; but they were such as at the time to fan into full vigour the fires of that lady's wrath.

Cousin Elizabeth stormed and raved till Lutchina cowered before her, speechless, and at last fled from the room.

Soon after the Countess sought the Baron. She had a red spot on either cheek, and her eyes still flamed.

"I am about to leave the Schloss," she said to him. "I have been insulted."

The Baron dropped his book.

"Who has insulted you?" he asked.

"Your wife."

The Baron rose; he was very quiet.

"What has she said to thee?"

"It matters not. She has insulted me, and I choose to leave this day. That is all."

The Countess was decision from the point of her black slipper to the topmost bow on her cap, and the Baron saw it.

"Very well," said he. "When two women fall out, it is useless for a man to step between them. But I am sorry."

"It is I that am sorry for you," answered the Countess. She sighed, and looked at the old man. Her gaze was like a spear piercing a lion's side.

The Baron struck a table with his clenched fist, till the things upon it leapt up.

"Hold your tongue!" he said.

The Countess left the room.

Lutchina was not to be seen for many hours.

"Where is she?" asked the Baron of Melchior as the latter strolled in.

"How should I know?" returned Melchior a little gloomily.

"How should you not know?" demanded the Baron, not looking, however, at his son.

"I am not the Baroness's watchdog," laughed Melchior.

"Then she has not been with you?"

Melchior looked at his father, who still was not looking at him. Then he answered quietly—

"I have been out all the morning fishing, and I have not seen the Baroness."

When the travelling carriage came round, and the Countess had packed herself into it, with her innumerable packages, Lutchina was still not visible.

"It is best so," said cousin Elizabeth, as she kissed the Baron frigidly. Then she beckoned to Grutli.

"Be faithful to thy master," she whispered, laying a handsome present in her hand.

Grutli curtseyed, her eyes flashing back a significant answer.

The Countess arranged herself in the carriage; she did not seem to see Melchior, who stood by, facing her and the light boldly. Then, amid a great cracking of whips, she rolled away from the Schloss.

"That is a comfort!" mused the Baron, looking after her. But his eye was dull as he turned back to his silent study, and one would have said his heart belied the words.

When, an hour later, Lutchina met her husband, he did not ask her where she had been.

"Do not stay out in this fashion again," he said, addressing her in a clear, cold tone that cut like steel. "Remember thou art no longer a peasant, but my wife."

She had been on the mountains, and her hands were full of gentians. Blue is the colour of God's heaven; perhaps she thought she crept a little from the toils of evil as she lay upon them. Who knows? But she thrust them on the fire as she passed it, after the Baron spoke; nor did she reply to him.

"Cousin Elizabeth—" she faltered.

"Is gone."

The Baron did not raise his head, but continued to ply his pen; his face was inscrutable; Lutchina could learn nothing from it but proud, dignified displeasure.

She looked a moment at the bent white head as though this indifference to her presence stung her, then withdrew silently. Outside the door she paused again, and a little tremor shook her.

"He hurt me!" she said. Yet, strange to say, as she murmured the words a light stole into her eyes that was not unlike the glad flickering of the first spring sunbeam on snow.

But, as the door closed on his wife, the Baron rose from his seat, and began to pace the room.

"I could forgive all," he muttered, "if she would only speak."

So it is sometimes. The want of a word will do just as much mischief as a hundred outspoken.

In between storms there is often a lull so deceptive that men as they look on the horizon see not the black cloud lying in wait behind the

sun, nor know that it is there till it breaks upon them again in thunder and fire. Thus at the Schloss things went on as smooth outwardly as usual now that the Countess had left.

Melchior fished, and the Baron wandered amongst his art-treasures; if he was silent and preoccupied, there was none to note it but Lutchina, unless it might be Grutli.

A few weeks passed thus, and then one day the Baroness strayed into the forest. The Schloss was surrounded by great pine-woods, only its gardens and the farm-lands being free from them. Lutchina now, if ever, loved to hide herself in their cool depths. Here alone did she seem able to bury her thoughts, or to face them and think them out in all their mingled bitterness; for within the Schloss she lived as under a spell. There she could not sever wrong from right, for Fate, in Melchior, sat between, and weighted the balance with the Past. But here the silence crept into her, and stilled the throbbing pulses of her troubles; here, where the wind stirred softly about her, light and sweet as infant's breath, where the great trees arched cloister-wise above her head and murmured solemnly together, she could lie still for brief whiles, and be at rest! Almost at rest!

The Baroness had sat an hour at the foot of a gaunt pine on this day watching the squirrels at play, and listening to the soft thud of the cones as they fell on the earth around, when a measured tread broke the deep stillness of the woods, and presently Matthias came in sight. He had a faggot of wood on his shoulder, but when he looked up in passing through the trees, and saw Lutchina's white robe standing out against a black pine, his burden seemed to increase. He paused as if in thought, then laid down the wood, and approached her.

Lutchina gazed upon him with a vague distrust.

"Have you more ill news to give me?" she asked, vexed that her solitude should be disturbed, and noting a strange look of intensity on the man's face.

"I do not know," said Matthias quietly, "but what I have to say, I must say."

Lutchina laid her red-brown head against the tree-trunk.

"Say on," she answered, a touch of defiance in her tone, though she smiled at him.

Matthias looked this way and that; the silence in the wood deepened; finally he looked straight into Lutchina's eyes.

"Lutchina," he said, "in the old days, long ago, I loved thee. I would have lain down my life sooner than let ill befall thee; aye, or be spoken of thee."

Lutchina looked at him silently; her smile had died away.

"To think an evil thought of those we love—there is no pain like it," ended Matthias simply, his brow wrinkling.

"You think evil then of me?"

Lutchina's eyes were wide and serious as she put the question.

"God forbid, Frau Baronin! and yet—."

(To be continued.)

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF A SONNET.

BY FRANCIS WATT.

ON a beautiful evening in September, Marmaduke Tremayne, sitting in his little garret in the south, or least expensive, part of Museum Street, London, was putting the finishing touches to a satirical sonnet he had just composed. The name Tremayne is a noble one. It has a fine old West-of-England air about it, and insensibly recalls the Elizabethan era. But we must confess that the hero of this short tale bore it only by right of assumption. His baptismal name was mean and common, and it was due to his own genius that he had thus redressed these inequalities of fortune. It was not in everything that he could do so. The light of a common paraffin-lamp showed how little of this world's goods he possessed; for a bed, a chair, a table, a desk, were the chief contents of the room. Marmaduke was by choice and necessity (since thus he earned his living) a poet; but the work on which he was usually engaged was not of a pleasing or lofty description. The singular felicity of his rhymes was known to some of the chief patent medicine vendors, perfumers, and hair-dressers of the metropolis, and some of his verses in praise of pill, or salt, or hair-dye, had probably been read by every English reading individual in the world; so widely had enterprising men advertized his works. Indeed, if you had given the ordinary British citizen one of Marmaduke's verses, he would have "capped" it with its successor much more readily than he could have continued the most hackneyed of Shakesperian quotations. A few guineas were all, however, that this world-read author made by these efforts; but, few as they were, it was all that he had to subsist on. He had, indeed, written many other poems. His sonnets to his mistress out-numbered those of Petrarch. In his desk were two tragedies, and odes on every possible occasion and subject, but he could not even get these printed. His advertisement poems at least gave him a living. There was, however, that night, a prospect of something better. He had been commissioned to write a political squib for a paper of some little note. He had adopted his favourite sonnet form, and had produced what was really a clever, effective piece of verse, in which the various telling points of the situation were lightly, neatly, and effectively touched off. And now it was finished. The labour of many hours lay before him, copied out in a neat, legible hand, such as compositors delight in, and such as, alas, they rarely see. He was about to descend with it, when a heavy, shuffling tread was heard approaching. It was as if some strong internal force propelled, but propelled with difficulty, a huge mass. Marmaduke knew it only too well. It was his landlady! With scarcely an apology of a knock she threw open the door, and panting with the unwonted exertion (even an athlete might have panted as he climbed those interminable stairs, much more a stout, elderly woman, unused to exercise of any kind) said—

"And I'd like to know, Mr. Tremayne, would it be convenient for you to pay this 'ere little bill to-night?"

It was only in landlady parlance that it could

be called a "little" bill; indeed, it was a tolerably long one, and contained a full and exact account of our poet's expenditure—well, not expenditure, but household debts—for an indefinite number of weeks.

Marmaduke instinctively dived his hand into his pocket and brought forth a shilling; it was the only one he had—and a number of pawn-tickets, at sight of which the lady gave an expressive grunt. He then confusedly muttered something about "inexplicable non-appearance of an expected remittance" and "to-morrow." This was probably not the first, or even the second, time that his landlady heard these words, but to-day her temper—it was none of the best—fairly got the better of her.

"To-morrow? it's allers to-morrow. 'Ere I've been a-waitin' day after day. All I know is that to-morrow out you go, as sure as heggs is heggs, unless this 'ere bill's paid."

"But a remittance is absolutely sure to arrive."

"Oh, yes, very likely, but we've 'eard that too often. Howsomever, you gets till to-morrow, but no longer."

So saying she departed, banging the door after her with a force that shook the crazy tenement to its very foundation.

Marmaduke, as soon as the coast was clear, seized his hat and descended the stairs. In his hand he held his precious sonnet. He proposed to deliver it personally, and try to get paid on the spot. He did not expect very much, still, it would be a sop to Cerberus.

Museum Street, as my readers are probably aware, is very short, but it is continued under the name of Drury Lane. That famous place is sadly fallen from its historic glories. To him who hastily passes through it, it seems to be composed of fried-fish shops, and a curious odour of fried-fish hangs about it, alike in the hottest summer and the coldest winter days. In one respect it seems fitly to remind one of its former somewhat wicked glories. It has all the repulsiveness of dishonoured old age. It is ancient, yet not venerable; decayed, but not picturesque. It is a fit picture of the sad old age of a battered roué. Its denizens saunter slowly along, for they have no sufficient intent or object in life to make them go quickly. This was awkward for our hero, however, who was in a hurry, as he was somewhat behind time, and who pushed his way impetuously along through the almost inert masses of humanity. He forgot that he held something precious by too insecure a grasp. A puff of wind came, and tore it from his hand. Up it floated in the moonlight, whilst Marmaduke gazed at it in a very trance of despair. Before it had quite disappeared he rushed after it. In a lull of the wind it dropped down, and seemed almost within his grasp; then, as if endowed with some mocking spirit, it rose on the breeze, and flew like a dove—at least it seemed so to Marmaduke—over the house-tops, and he saw it no more.

Now, this might not seem a very great misfortune. Our hero had composed his sonnet that very evening, and surely he could remember it. He who thinks so forgets the sensitive nature of the poet. His nerves were unstrung by the rude conduct of his landlady and this remarkable accident, so that not a single complete line could be remembered. A fortuitous concourse of half-lines

and disconnected words went jingling through his brain, but nothing definite formed itself out of this chaos.

He wandered mechanically on till he was brought suddenly to a stand-still by the sight of a big brass-plate, on which *The Tadpole* was inscribed in large letters. In a sort of maze he entered, and was speedily shown into the editor's room, then occupied by the "sub," who, in the temporary absence of his chief, and dressed in a little brief authority, was editing the paper.

"A little late," said this individual, pompously, as he glanced at the clock, "but no doubt you have your poem with you?"

"I've lost it."

"Lost it; and how, pray?"

"The wind blew it out of my hand on the way here, and it flew away and was lost," stammered the agitated poet.

The "sub" gave a long, low whistle. It was quite evident what he thought as he contemplated the flushed, agitated countenance of Marmaduke. He suspiciously sniffed the surrounding atmosphere, but there was nothing but the usual heavy smell of printers' ink and damp paper.

"Well, sit down there and run it off again. Surely that can't be much trouble; and please be quick, for here's the boy for more copy," he said, as a little black imp appeared from some lower region.

Marmaduke sat down and took the pen, but not a word could he put on the paper. The whirring of some machinery down-stairs filled his ear; the occupants of the room seemed dream-figures; the whole place was veiled in a mysterious haze. The "sub" glared; the boy grinned, and they both again sniffed up suspiciously the printers' ink atmosphere. The pen fell on the paper, but it was only to draw a disconnected line.

Marmaduke dropped it, covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

"Begone, sir," shouted the "sub," furious with rage; "begone, sir, you are drunk, sir, and don't venture to come here again, sir."

Marmaduke had not spirit to reply, or to defend himself against an unjust accusation. He took his hat and humbly retired, with the mocking laugh of the printer's-devil ringing in his ears.

He wandered aimlessly about the streets for a little. What desperate resolution he might have taken it is not easy to say; but in his pocket he discovered his almost forgotten shilling. He rationally determined that it should perish before he did; and by expending it in very weak beer and very strong gin he managed to completely muddle himself, and become alike unconscious of the sorrowful past and the gloomy future. The next day was already well advanced before he sought his lofty yet humble couch.

Let us now return to the sonnet, which, borne by a steady breeze, moved on at a reasonable speed towards Fleet Street. The night was a favourable one for its voyage. Overhead a bright moon shone down upon it from a cloudless sky. Innumerable street organs poured forth the strains of "Oh! my little darling" as a sort of serenade, whilst cats on the house-tops screamed at it as it sailed onwards. As it came into the shadow of the Law Courts its voyage seemed ended. It began to descend, shaved the nose of the Griffin,

and was about to fall into the mud, when yet another gust of that windy night lifted it up again. Was it destined to find a watery grave in the Thames, or to be flattened against the dome of St. Paul's? Neither! It flew into an open window in Fleet Street, and settled quietly down on a writing desk, whereon lay a profusion of other papers. Had the sonnet been endowed with sense, nothing could have been more happy than its choice of a resting-place. It was the editor's room of that brilliant society journal, *The Glass of Fashion*. The room was vacant when the sonnet entered, but the editor entered almost immediately, shut the window, sat down at his desk, and began rapidly to look over the papers placed there. He was very busy, for he had but lately returned to his office, after a somewhat lengthened term of imprisonment for libel, and at the termination of the long vacation it was extremely probable that he would again exchange the office for the cell on a new charge of a similar nature. He was in excellent "form," however, for the regular hours and diet at his late residence had had the most beneficial effect upon his health, somewhat impaired by a too liberal indulgence in the pleasures of the table, so he now set to work with great vigour. Almost the first paper he touched was the sonnet.

"Capital, the very thing," he muttered, "sharp, characteristic, even brilliant, and yet not libellous. At least, I think not," he said a little doubtfully, and with something of a sigh.

How came it here though? The "sub" must have put it, I suppose. Marmaduke Tremayne? (the name and address were at the foot). New writer—more likely *nom-de-plume* of some well-known hand. It must go in to-morrow, at any rate, and if Tremayne can give us a dozen more like it, we'll take them."

The last scene of our brief story is again in Museum Street. It was late in the afternoon when Marmaduke awoke. At first the room floated confusedly before his eyes, and the bed seemed to rock like a ship at sea; but things began gradually to steady themselves, and then he remembered the adventures of the past night—the absent sonnet, the present—the all too present—bill, and all the vile and petty—the more vile because petty—miseries of his lot.

As he "cast his baleful eyes around," he noticed that a long envelope had been thrust under the door. He lay wildly staring at it for some time before he listlessly crawled out of bed, took and opened it. Out tumbled a copy of the *Glass* with his sonnet on the very first page. A note, saying that the editor would be pleased to have an interview with him, and a cheque for a very fair sum, were also enclosed.

The *Glass*, we may remark, is honourably distinguished for the liberality and promptitude of its payments. Hence the speedy nature of the return, and hence too, our author was able to administer the much needed "sop" to Cerberus. Marmaduke saw the editor in a day or two, and the extraordinary circumstances under which the sonnet had introduced itself were conjectured, for they could hardly be fully explained. Our poet became one of the most regular contributors to the *Glass*, and though it cannot be said that his troubles were over, yet it was at least the beginning of better days for him.

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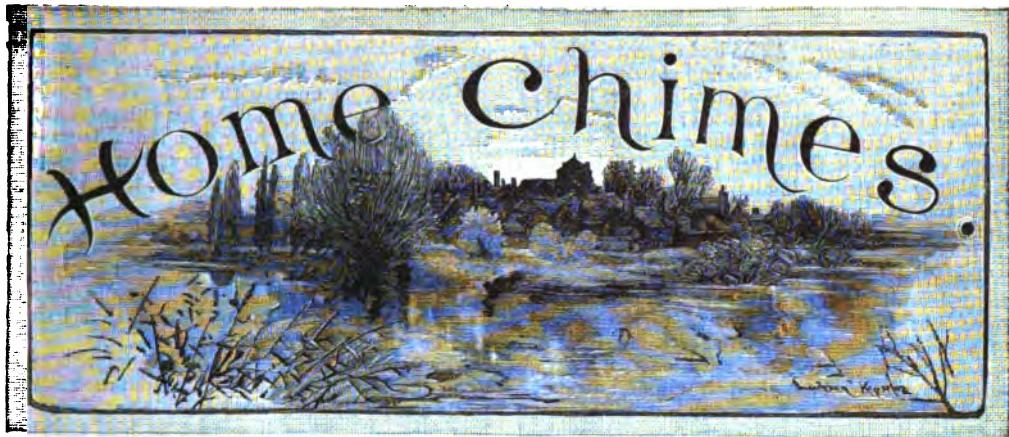
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

PROHIBITION.

BY PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

IT was a dry, dusty, blazing, thirsty July afternoon when Mr. Everard Hunt arrived, with others, at the pretty seaside resort of St. Recche, in the south of Brittany. Along glaring roads he had had a drive of thirty miles, perched on the top of a huge cumbersome diligence, drawn by poor lean horses, decked out with jingling bells, and stimulated to their work by a fiend of a Breton driver, who spared neither blows nor imprecations; but at last the tediums, not to say painful, journey was at an end, and the travellers alighted and swarmed into the vine-covered courtyard of the one hotel which St. Roche boasted.

"Yes, monsieur could have a room, if he did not mind a rather small one at the top of the house."

Monsieur did not mind in the least; he only wanted some place where he could be in shade, a bed on which he could lie down and surrender himself to sleep, for he had been travelling hard, and had not closed his eyes for four and twenty hours.

"Would monsieur take anything to eat?"

Monsieur would not.

"Would monsieur dine at six o'clock at the *table d'hôte*?"

Monsieur would, but now wished only to be shown to his room, whither he was conducted by a pretty chambermaid, who rattled along as if she were talking for a wager. The room in which he at length found himself was a primitive apartment, the door and floor being of plain unvarnished wood. A washstand of the same material, containing a diminutive jug and basin, with a chair beside it, across the back of which a towel was flung, and a high, curtained bed, completed the scant furniture of the room.

Hunt partially undressed, washed the dust

from hands and face, closed the *jalousies* against the blanching, vertical eye-flare of the absolute noon,

threw himself on the bed with a sigh of relief, and turned his face to the wall, obeying an instinct natural to all persons when weary or in pain, yet one which has never been accounted for.

He had thought the sleep for which he had craved so long would fall upon him instantly; but not so. For more than half an hour he lay awake, listening to the flies as they went whirling and buzzing about the room; he could hear a murmur of voices from the courtyard, occasionally cut through by the shrill treble of a little French girl whom he had noticed from the first. Gradually, however, the sounds ran into one another, his heavy eyes closed, and his deep regular breathing showed what deep draughts of rest he was drinking in; and the day went by in a glory of blue sky and blinding sunlight.

Presently a sharp rap at the door made him start; it opened, and a waiter presented himself.

"He was so sorry, but monsieur had been shown to the wrong room, this one being already engaged. If monsieur would be so good as to follow him, he would conduct him to the right room; it was just as comfortable an apartment."

Hunt rose and followed with weary feet. They passed by many doors.

"This is monsieur's room," said the waiter, pausing before one, and opening it.

Hunt stepped in, and the door closed behind him.

Instantly a feeling of something horrible was upon him; a very agony of terror seized him. The curtains of the bed were drawn; that something was behind them he felt certain. He approached and drew them back with trembling hands, and looked down upon the face of a woman—a beautiful marble-white face, the features perfectly cut, the large dark eyes dreadfully wide open. On the left temple he

HOME CHIMES.

noticed a slight scar. As he looked more intently he saw that blood was trickling slowly from her throat. There had been foul play here! Was she dead or had she only fainted?

He was asking himself this question when a shape rose up on the other side of the bed, and wordlessly confronted him. He started back with the cold sweat breaking out upon his forehead, for he looked into the eyes of—himself!

The man he saw grasped a long knife; he pointed it at the girl's throat. Hunt strove to move, but his feet were rooted to the ground; he strove to call aloud, but for some time his lips travailed vainly. At length a wild shriek burst from them; he seemed to fall, and awoke!

It had been only a dream, but a dream so vivid that he awoke with every nerve convulsed with fear. Indeed it was some time before he could realize that it had been no more than a dream.

The hotel was alive with the sound of feet going to or coming from their various rooms. Presently the first bell rang. Hunt got off his bed, made his toilette, and descended to the *table d'hôte* room, into which by this time the hungry visitors were crowding. He felt rather lonely, Everard Hunt, as he took his seat at a side-table, which he was to share with some half-dozen of the latest arrivals. He listened to the babel of voices all around him, the clatter of spoons, knives, and forks, the scraping of a chair over the polished floor as it was drawn nearer to the table. All the people at dinner seemed on speaking terms with one another. He only sat solitary and moody.

Everard Hunt was more a remarkable-looking man than a handsome one. He was tall and slight, with an extremely white complexion, contrasting oddly with dark vivid eyes and a good deal of black waving hair. His cheeks were rather sunken. You would have said that he was a man who worked his brain too much, and you would have been correct. As novelist and journalist he produced an amount of work which fairly staggered even the hardest workers. There was no necessity for him to write so desperately hard, for he was a single man. The truth is, that with an almost fragile constitution he combined a morbid energy of brain, which made inaction a veritable torment to him, unless all the time constant distraction were presented to him.

In his father and mother he unfortunately found no sympathy at all; they were people quite of an old-fashioned type, and looked down upon the calling he had chosen. Most men and women liked him, for he had a low pleasant voice, and a manner which was not only courtly to women, but to men, and the most hard-headed of them felt the charm of it even though they were not able to analyse it. He liked many people, and well, but not for long; and so by those who knew him he came to be called rather fickle; but surely it was rather his misfortune than his fault.

Do not such restless natures long for rest? I think they do. And as it had been with his friends, so was it with his loves: they could not hold him, and the last little girl of whom he had wearied had come to him in a dream—come with her soft, gold hair, her sweet lips all quivering, her piteous blue eyes all full of tears! And in the dream she had knelt down by his bed—her hands

grown so thin in those days!—and had said in a voice trembling a little, and wet with her tears—

"Everard, be open with me! The faint pretext you make now of loving me is harder to bear than it would be to hear the truth from your lips! You are breaking my heart. Speak! When I know the worst certainly, then I may get strength to bear it."

And he had answered in great bitterness of spirit—

"Child, I have striven to do my duty by you; but if you will have the truth, I do not love you as I ought to do. I do not believe that I should ever be able to make you happy."

Then he had felt a kiss, cold as a snowflake, fall upon his mouth, and a cold wind fan his brow, while a voice like the wind speaking whispered to him farewell. Then it seemed to him that there was a white light in the room, into which she vanished. Then he awoke from the strange dream with a start, and a dreadful certainty of something being ill! He had been travelling on the Continent, and was on his way home; he reached London the next evening, and had not been there more than an hour when he learned that the girl he had tried so hard to love had died the previous night.

I am no spiritualist, but I have known stranger things happen than that which I have just narrated. It seems to me a mere matter often of sensitive organisation and intensity of feeling. Other dreams of Everard Hunt's had been fulfilled in an equally remarkable way, and they were all disastrous dreams, either for himself or for those who at the time were dear to him; and as he ate his dinner in company of a solid and stolid-looking English family, and listened mechanically to a fierce dispute between two fat Frenchmen as to whether the windows should be closed or not, he was haunted by his afternoon's dream. It produced upon him that feeling of nameless melancholy we experience when, after a summer day of brilliant sunlight, the evening closes in with a grey overcast sky, and a sad chill wind begins to wail among the trees, and to shower the rose-leaves down, as if indeed autumn were already come!

As soon as the dinner was concluded, he went on to the terrace in front of the hotel, where people were walking up and down, or taking after-dinner coffee at little tables. Here, morning and evening, a band performed selections of really well-chosen music. The musicians were assembling in their places when he seated himself at one of the tables, and called for coffee, at the same time lighting a cigar.

A purely gold and infinitely ethereal sunset lay upon the sea, surprising its depths with an unexpected glory of light. Then with clash of cymbals and clamour of horns, the band burst out, as in triumph. To this succeeded passages of slow, languorous music, the low delusions complaining of the flutes responded to by a note of tender urgency from the stringed instruments, and then through that mingled glamour of light and sound he, raising his eyes, saw standing almost close beside him—the lady of his dream!

The folds of her dress clung closely about her, suggesting, though far from revealing, the exquisite contour of limbs and figure. He recognised the warm brown hair he had seen spread out upon

the pillow—recognized the wonderful dark eyes which he had seen so dreadfully wide open! recognized the diamond ring which he had noticed shining on the middle finger of the left hand. Was the little scar there on her temple? That he could not tell, as the way in which she wore her abundant hair would have concealed it. She was in the company of another girl, who, though pretty enough, looked quite commonplace by her side.

"Why did you not come to the *table d'hôte*?" this second one asked as soon as the music had ceased.

"We meant to have done so," replied the other in a voice wonderful for its depth and sweetness, and for all its reserved power; "but at the last moment mamma thought she would rather have something in her own room. She's not a good traveller, you know. To-morrow I hope we shall dine in public. The people at the *table d'hôte* always amuse me so much."

"And my father says it is the best he knows, and he has been almost everywhere, you know. Ah, here he is! I said he would find us out at once, in spite of his short-sighted eyes," she added, as a benign-looking gentleman came up and accosted them with—

"Well, young ladies, shall we take a turn, and see what's going on at the other side?"

So they moved away, and left Hunt utterly confounded. The cigar had fallen from his fingers, his coffee remained untasted. The music played its loudest or its softest, and he heeded not. And the sun went down, and the stars smiled out far over the summer sea; and he heeded not, so completely was he absorbed in the heroine of his dream. His head was fallen in his hands; to all appearance he was asleep, when he heard, as if almost in a dream, that low sweet voice again near him, saying—

"He has been asleep all the evening."

To which answered the silver treble of her friend's voice—

"He seemed to be very absent-minded all dinner-time. I noticed him at once, and called him 'The Mysterious.' He looks, you know, as if he had something on his mind. Don't you think he may be—" and here the young lady's voice subsided to a whisper.

"You foolish Violet!" answered her friend. "I always told you that with your imagination you ought to make a first-rate novelist! Why, you would beat Everard Hunt on his own ground!" and she laughed, a low subtle laugh that harmonized well with her voice. At the mention of his name from her lips it was all he could do to keep himself from starting. Just then the elderly gentleman came up, and bore the two girls away with him.

The band had ceased for the night; the terrace was almost deserted. Hunt began walking up and down. Was he in love with this girl? He could not tell. He only knew that her appearance, her voice, her laugh, the way in which she held herself, exercised over him an irresistible fascination—a fascination for which the dream was no doubt in part answerable.

At the hotel every one was expected to be in by eleven, except on some gala occasion; so, as it was nearly that hour, he went in. He was thirsty, and would have liked a glass of beer, but the

waiters looked so sleepy that he had no heart to ask for it, and went straight to bed, almost fearful to fall asleep, lest he should redream his dream of the afternoon. Indeed, he lay long awake, listening to the wash of the water among the pebbles—the soft, short, restful sighs of the sea—until, lulled by the exquisite music of it, he fell asleep; but his sleep, though sound while it lasted, was of brief duration. It was four o'clock when he awoke, and the sultry light of what promised to be another intensely hot day was stealing into the room.

His first thoughts were of the beautiful stranger, and it gave him a thrill to remember that she was under the same roof with him. She knew his books; that was something. He wondered if she had ever speculated as to what their author might be like? He recalled some of his most passionate love-scenes. He rather prided himself on his love-scenes, and thought that they would either have repelled or attracted her. Should he ever speak to her? ever take in his that firm, strong-looking hand? Should he ever tell her of the strange link there was between them?

No; he would not trust himself to be nearer her. If, indeed, she were the heroine of his dream, this point only—one piece of conclusive evidence—was wanting: had she or had she not that little scar on the left side of the forehead? His brain was at this time in an unusually excited condition, as he had just accomplished what was, even for him, an unusual amount of creative work. He took a book and read—or tried to read—till half-past five, and then, the hotel seeming well astir, he dressed, filled and lit a pipe, and went for a walk round the little town, which was already fragrant with the odours of hot bread and such good strong coffee as the French know how to brew.

Early as it was, the sun was already growing powerful, but there was a little wind blowing from the sea, whose brief life, however, would be done long before the great noon tide heat. He looked at the fruit-shop and the butcher's, where the landlady of the hotel and her daughter had already come to cater for the things they needed for their visitors. Next he walked through the little bazaar of the place, which was always pervaded by a nameless odour, met with nowhere but there. In this little bazaar you bought shells and flat stones with views of St. Roche upon them, for which you paid of course absurd prices. He came upon the terrace, already alive with visitors in picturesque morning costumes, with the hills stretching away behind, and the sea in front ablaze with light. It was a fair scene, surely!

After a truly decorous French fashion, men and women, decently attired, bathed together, and the water was already gay with the many-coloured dresses and often the red caps of the bathers, and the air was musical with their light talk and cheery laughter.

Hunt was standing at the head of the shallow wooden steps leading to the beach, when the door of one of the bathing *cabanes* opened, and a young lady came out and made directly for where he was standing. She was dressed in white, with a red sash wound about her waist. Her hair, on which the sea-drops shone in the sunlight, was thrown loose upon her shoulders to get dry, and bound back by a piece of red ribbon. He recognized the

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beautiful face of the lady of his dream. She came up the steps with the left side of her face towards him. His eyes at once fastened on her temple. There, no longer hidden by the hair, was the little scar!

He fairly started back as she passed. It was she, then, beyond all doubt!

He had noticed two empty places at the side-table the night before. Was it most to his rapture or despair that at breakfast he found them filled by the girl who had so bewitched him and by a gracious-looking lady of some forty years, who was evidently her mother. Through the meal, mother and daughter conversed in low tones; and any little attention on Hunt's part, such as passing them the salt or pepper, won from them the most courteous recognition. He was wondering what their name might be, when a young man of rather dandified appearance, who had come in late, strolled up to the table where they were sitting, and said, with a suspicion of a drawl—

"How do you do, Mrs. Sumnor? and you, Miss Sumnor?—well, I hope."

Mrs. Sumnor answered for both.

"Well, you know, I'm never very strong; but as for Blanche, I tell her she's for all the world like those flowers that bloom perpetually—there are such flowers, are there not, Mr. Talbot?"

Mr. Talbot was not quite clear upon the point, but rather thought Mrs. Sumnor was getting such flowers mixed up with the fellow that blooms once in a hundred years.

Mrs. Sumnor thought she must have done so. Then the ladies expressed their surprise at seeing Mr. Talbot, and asked when he came, and then they "would keep him no longer from his breakfast," and so dismissed him, and soon afterwards left the table.

Hunt went for a long walk until such time as he should be in good swimming condition, but all day the thought of Miss Sumnor stayed with him. He longed to speak to her, and yet dreaded to do so, for the fear of her, begotten of his dream, was upon him.

He had just scaled a somewhat precipitous part of the coast, and was walking leisurely along the top of the cliff, when his attention was attracted by an exclamation of distress, and looking downwards, he perceived an elderly gentleman about three-quarters up the steep ascent, making violent but apparently futile endeavours to reach the summit; indeed he seemed in imminent danger of altogether collapsing and falling to the bottom, where sharp and jagged rocks would have received him.

Hunt had little muscular force, but he had great nervous energy, and without a moment's hesitation he sprang down with the agility of a chamois, and reaching out both hands, cried in a cheery voice—

"Take firm hold, sir, and we shall be all right. I'm accustomed to mountain-climbing"—as indeed he was.

All the same, it proved hot and hard work, though the elderly gentleman did his best to be as little of a burden as possible. The foothold was scant and slippery. At times it seemed to them both as if they must give in and go to the bottom. They could hear the lark's song above them, and the sound turned them sick. There was a moment of awful swaying backwards and

forwards, which might have ended fatally but for a very "big, big D" from Hunt, after which he absolutely went leaping on his way till the summit was attained. Then they both fell together on the grassy height, with hearts and pulses beating fast, and streaming foreheads.

Said Hunt, in his low, sweet voice—

"Don't you think that excuses a cigarette?" And taking out tobacco and paper he began to roll one.

"I owe my life to you," replied the other.

"My dear sir," responded Hunt, with a slight hesitation customary with him when trying not to appear at all excited, "the merest boy could have done what I did, only the merest boy was not fortunate enough to be passing just then. And as this happens to be my birthday, I take this very slight service I have been enabled to render you as a good angury."

It is hardly needful to say that Hunt had recognized in the man whom he had undoubtedly saved the father of Miss Sumnor's friend.

"Sir," rejoined that gentleman, "we won't mince matters. You have saved a life which I have no desire to lose. Allow me to shake your hand, and accept my heartfelt gratitude."

"Taking your excellency's gratitude with no cause is as bad as obtaining money under false pretences," said Hunt, with one of his most winning smiles, "but the temptation is too strong to be resisted," and with that he held out his hand, and the two men shook hands warmly.

After a little while they went on their way sociably side by side, and presently their talk ran on literature.

"Well," remarked Mr. Langstone—for such was the gentleman's name—"I am editor of a weekly paper; I've never written a line of anything creative. All the same, I think I know pretty well good work from bad. Now, there's A—, of whom all the world talks so much. Well, I find in him plenty of character, but no story. On the other hand, take B—: plenty of plot, but no characterization; and, mark you, both good men in their way. I think that of all the men now writing the one I like best, taking him for an all-round kind of man, is Everard Hunt. You know his novels, of course?"

"Alas!" replied Hunt, "I know them but too well!"

"Do you mean," asked the other, with an air of surprise, "that you don't like them?"

"I mean," said Hunt, smiling, "that I wrote them."

"Then I have really the pleasure and pride of owing my life to one to whom I already owe the beguiling of so many hours?"

"I am happy indeed," responded Hunt, "to know that I have been of the least good or pleasure to any one."

That evening Everard Hunt was of course introduced to Mrs. Langstone and her pretty daughter Violet, and to Mrs. and Miss Sumnor, who were sitting close by. Violet blushed very becomingly over the introduction; Miss Sumnor, on the other hand, retained perfect self-composure, saying, in her sweet languorous voice, that it was such a pleasure to meet Mr. Hunt after having read all his books.

"All?" he queried. "Not really all?"

"Yes, really all."

"However can you have written so many, Mr. Hunt, and yet look such a young man? It astonishes me!" said Mrs. Sumnor, who went on the task of making herself at home with people.

"Oh," he replied with a laugh, "I began the business early, and it's wonderful how much you can do when you make a regular business of it. So many pages to so many hours; so many hours a day. Besides, as we say in the trade, my stories are of the kind that write themselves."

Then, in honour of Hunt's birthday, Mr. Langstone called for champagno, and they were a merry party; and once Hunt, leaning back in his chair, his eyes drawn irresistibly to the lovely face of Miss Sumnor, thought he detected about her lips a look of latent satire; and he wondered how he should feel, with his sensitive excitable temperament, if he were ever the subject of it from her.

There was a dance that night at the Casino, and the girls urged their respective parents to accompany them there. Hunt's heart glowed within him at the prospect of holding the beautiful Miss Sumnor in his arms. He thought the time would never come for the dancing to begin. In the meanwhile, whether walking or sitting, these two somehow were always together. Once she said to him, "Don't you think, Mr. Hunt, you make your characters just love a little too much? Now, candidly, do you really think they have quite such good or such bad times as you give them?"

"Perhaps you were never in love?" he said.

"I should think not. I have liked some people better than others—but that is hardly being 'in love,' is it?"

"Hardly. But the dancers are assembling—shall we follow?"

In a few minutes more, Blanche Sumnor, close-clasped in her admirer's arm, was being whirled over the polished floor of the *salon*. She had roses in her hair and bosom, and the potent perfume of them seemed to melt into his blood. His feeling for this girl was distinctly a new sensation.

While they were yet dancing, the delicate rose colour left her cheeks suddenly; she turned deathly pale; and he seemed to see her as she had been in his dream, stretched out upon her bed, with the blood trickling from her throat.

"Please take me into the open air," she said. "I am faint!"

They left the room at once, and he led her to a seat. They sat for some moments in silence, she breathing rapidly, as one does when the action of the heart is disturbed. He took her hand and felt her pulse. In his way he was something of a doctor, and he felt at once that it was beating with dreadful irregularity. The night was warm, but her hand was almost numb. He took it between both of his, and held it fast. She made no resistance. He had singularly magnetic hands, and in a short time his close pressure imparted warmth to hers.

Behind them were the lights of the *salon* and the sound of music, half pathetic, half voluptuous. In front was the sea, brimmed with moonlight, and the murmur of its then quiet waters as they delicately sifted the pebbles. Blanche and Everard had the terrace to themselves, and there was to him a subtle magic in the situation which could

not be analyzed. It was by no means the first time that Mr. Everard Hunt had sat with fair women in the moonlight, and had taken their hands to hold too, and by that same moon had protested a great deal too much. But this was different; perhaps because he had never before been so fascinated, and the strange dream was also an important factor in the situation.

Presently Blanche said, withdrawing her hand gradually—

"Thank you; you have done me a great deal of good; indeed, I am quite well now! Please don't mention this before mamma, as it only troubles her needlessly. I am subject to these attacks of faintness. Excitement or depression will often induce them. How pleasant it is out here!" she went on, drawing a long, quiet breath; "but ought we not to go back?"

Hunt said he thought it would be better for her to stay a little longer in the open air, and so they stayed. Then they took a turn together, in which they paused to lean over the terrace wall and look down on the sea. Their hands touched on the wall, but that, of course, was an accident. At length she said—and was there something of regret thrilling in her tone?—

"We must go in now."

"Yes," he answered; and so they went.

The next morning Everard Hunt came to the conclusion that he would leave St. Roche. His strange dream haunted him; he strove to forget it, but could not. You call him morbid? So do I; but hard work and late hours had rendered him just then unusually sensitive to the receiving of impressions.

At breakfast he announced his intention to his new friends, who were much taken by surprise. Mrs. Sumnor said that it was too bad of him; that she believed he was frightened away by the girls. Pretty Violet Langstone observed with a laugh that he didn't look as if he could be so easily alarmed. Blanche asked if it was business that called him away. This was later on, when they were sitting in the courtyard—the rest of the party absorbed in making plans for the day.

"No," he answered, "it is not business. Some day"—and he hesitated, with his eyes irresistibly drawn to her face.

"Yes," she said, conscious of his admiring look; "what about some day?"

Only that some day, if she cared to hear, he might be able to tell her, yet he didn't think he ever could.

"And why not? Will you tell me nothing that I want to know?"

"Indeed, the reason why I leave this place," he answered, with trouble in look and voice, "I could not tell you."

"As you please," she said with feigned indifference.

It was wonderful in what a little while a kind of understanding seemed to have sprung up between them.

An hour afterwards the great lumbering *diligence* stood, with its team of gaunt horses, in the courtyard of the hotel, and there was much talking and much gesticulation between those departing and those remaining behind. Hunt took a cordial leave of the Langstones. When he came to say good-bye to Miss Sumnor, there was something almost of hesitation in his manner.

"Good-bye!" she said, her tone just slightly raised. There was in it a note of blended regret and acquiescence, which said to him as plainly as words, "It is your doing, you know. You would have it so."

Did his eyes say in reply, "If you only knew, you would pity me"? I fancy they did.

He took his seat by the driver, and the cumbersome thing moved off with a crack of whip and jingle of bells; and the thought of Miss Sumnor pursued Mr. Hunt. It was with him all along the glaring road; it walked in with him to his hotel. At Nantes it was with him in the quiet of his apartment; it was with him through the long, loud *table-d'hôte*; it was with him when he went down to smoke his cigar by the Loire, and to try and meditate on the horrors once committed there. But nothing freed him from the thought of Blanche. She seemed in one way more present to him now than they were apart.

Through the twilight and the low wash of the water—into which a man was sending a dog—he heard in memory the low languorous voice which seemed to permeate the sense like a perfume. He seemed to see again the deep changeful eyes, with latent passion in their depths—to feel once more the firm but magnetic hand in his. She was one of those women whom you would have known near by a subtle influence if you had not seen her.

Harm to her should never come through him, he said! Then, throwing his cigar away, he went back to his hotel, to lie awake in the dark thinking of her—to wonder if she were asleep—if perchance she had thought of him that day—to re-enact in memory the scene of the foregoing night, when they had sat together on the terrace in the moonlight, and he had held those wonderful hands in his, and touched the happy rings he had seen shine upon her fingers!

The next morning early he again set out on his travels, in which I do not propose accompanying him. Suffice it to say that in the autumn he went to Spain, where he saw old churches, proud nobles, courtly beggars, splendour and squalor, dark-eyed seductive gipsies, stormy bull-fights, and the hundred-and-one other things which make that famous country, as it were, the very well-head of romance! But nothing diverted his thoughts from Blanche Sumnor. He began a novel, of which she was to be the central figure, thinking that by that means he might, as it were, drain off his feelings. But it was all to no purpose, and one day, at the beginning of December, he found himself in London again, a man absolutely haunted by the sense of a personal presence. He worked mightily, albeit he was the latest man at his club. He grew haggard and wild-looking. By early spring he had put the MS. of his new novel in the hands of his publisher, who was going to send it at once to press.

One windy, sunny, showery April day, he took train for a little station about twenty miles out of London. In the compartment with him were two pretty and prettily-dressed women. From their clothes floated that nameless fragrance which does exhale from women who take justifiable pride in themselves and in their dress. Though their tones were perfectly well-bred and low, he could not help overhearing bits of their conversation.

"I am sure you will like her," said one, apparently the elder; "she is so *spirituelle*."

"And beautiful, is she not?" questioned the other.

"Yes, quite beautiful, I should say. She has been wanting to know you for a long time. Isn't the country advanced for the time of year? Because we had such a mild March, I suppose."

Then the engine shrieked and fled into a tunnel, and there was nothing but shock, and clamour, and cold, earth-smelling air.

Hunt, leaning back in his corner, wondered who this charming, *spirituelle* creature might be, and no sooner was the train safely delivered from the nightmare of the tunnel than the two other occupants of the compartment resumed their conversation.

"Plays beautifully, does she not?" asked the younger.

"Oh, yes, and sings divinely."

He wondered if he knew any one who was all the unknown was said to be—whether, if he should meet her, she would in any way free him from the thought of Blanche Sumnor. And he fell into a passionate love-reverie, from which he was startled by hearing the guard calling out the name of the place for which he was bound. It had been raining, but the sun was shining brightly as he came out of the little country station, his feet crunching the wet gravel audibly. There were fields around, from which larks went up rejoicing on their way; there was a sweet keen savour in the air of wet earth and grass as he walked on rapidly, hardly noticing a little pony-phaeton drawn up at the station door.

He had proceeded on his way some ten minutes, when he heard a woman's cry, and a sound of flying wheels and galloping hoofs. Then he saw coming on behind him a small carriage, drawn by a pair of high-spirited ponies, who, evidently frightened at something, had freed themselves from all restraint, and were running away just as hard as they knew how. Ever ready for an adventure, Hunt faced the position. He turned and stood still; then, as the carriage dashed up, he sprang forward and caught the reins. He had somewhat over-estimated his strength; he was whirled along for some distance before he managed to arrest their course, which they resented. They reared, he felt a blow, a sharp pain, heard some one scream, then fell and lost consciousness altogether. He knew nothing more until he awoke to find himself in bed in a strange room. A benevolent-looking man was standing by the bed regarding him intently.

"And how do you find yourself now, my dear sir?" commenced he, who was unmistakably a doctor.

"I feel a bad pain in my head," replied poor Hunt, bewilderedly, "and very much as if my shoulder were broken—but what has happened? and where am I? I have a kind of impression of being run down!"

"Your impression is correct. I don't believe in mystifying a sick man. My daughter's ponies, which she was driving herself, took fright and bolted. She had gone to bring some friends from the station. You, like a true Englishman, came to her assistance, but were yourself knocked down and generally rather maltreated. Fortunately, some men arrived just then; you were lifted into the carriage, and brought here. I am a doctor, and, although I am personally unknown to you,

you may through my wife and daughter be not quite unfamiliar with the name of Sumnor? They told me of meeting you at St. Roche last summer—where, by-the-by, you did a very kind turn to my dear old friend Langstone. Too venturesome, you know, for a man of his years. You seem a veritable Don Quixote, sir!"

So astonished was Hunt that for a minute he quite forgot his pain.

"Nay," he answered, "no Don Quixote! only a very lucky man, who has twice been able to do a little good."

Then Dr. Sumnor proceeded to medical examinations. He found no bones broken, but the left shoulder dislocated, and several cuts about the head; there was, however, fortunately, no symptom of injury to the brain. "Two or three weeks would do the business," the doctor said, and his words were verified; but the accident, coming at a time of great mental strain, had given a shock to the nervous organization from which he recovered only very slowly. He suffered from sleeplessness, depression, and want of appetite, so that, when he was healed of his injuries, Dr. Sumnor insisted on his remaining some time longer under his roof.

He will never forget the first evening when he was considered convalescent, and came down to dinner.

"The more he could eat and the more cheerful he could be the better for him," said the doctor.

It was May-day evening about six o'clock; and as he descended the stairs, leaning on his kind doctor's arm, the sweet scent of pink and white thorn-trees, with which the high-walled garden was lined, came in at the open windows. Thrushes and many other birds were busy singing still, and from the drawing-room, as the two men approached it, came the notes of a piano. Some one was playing a soft dreamy air.

"Like music?" asked the doctor.

"There is nothing I like more."

"That's all right. We must get Blanche to play to you. That's Blanche playing now. Fine, delicate touch, is it not? As I say to her, she has fingers that can think and feel. My dear," he added, as he opened the drawing-room door, "behold the man at last!"

Everard Hunt was at once installed in a luxurious arm-chair wheeled close to the open French window.

She stood before him in her warm, stately beauty. She said—

"I can't put my thanks into words, Mr. Hunt. I can only trust to your feeling them."

To repeat his disclaimers would be needless.

Mrs. Sumnor was out, driving with guests, and, the doctor being soon called away, they had the room to themselves. For about five minutes they sat together in complete silence.

Oh! ye who are versed in the subtle ways of the tender passion, tell me if it be not a dangerous symptom when two persons, being well-disposed towards each other, sit together in silence, and break it at last with talk like this:—

He: "I thought we should never meet again."

She: "Did you? I felt *sure* we should. Now will you tell me why you left St. Roche so suddenly?"

He: "I wish you had not recalled my reason for leaving."

She (with a touch of dignity): "Forgive me. I am sorry to have vexed you."

He (in despair): "But you have not vexed me. How could you even for a moment imagine such a thing?"

She (rising and taking a red rose from a vase on the table): "Let this make my peace."

And she fastens it in his coat, and, if I am not mistaken, their fingers meet. Then the refined, cheery voice of Mrs. Sumnor is heard in the garden talking to her guests, they having just returned.

"Thank you," says Hunt; and let me inform the unknowing, if there be any such (which I doubt), that "Thank you" in certain tones, and accompanied by certain looks, stands for a good deal. And he goes on, placing a finger on the flower—

One rose—a rose! What other rose had I?

Then Mrs. Sumnor comes in at the open French window, and expresses her pleasure at seeing him down, and he is introduced to Miss Collins and Miss Fairlie, in whom he sees the two pretty women with whom he travelled from London that eventful April day. The recognition is mutual, and conversation becomes easy. Then the dressing-bell sounds, and Hunt is left for a little while to his own reflections, and it seems to him as if the birds in the garden had something to say upon the subject of them.

On these days I do not propose dwelling. To detail Hunt's sufferings would be simply tedious, as they daily repeated themselves. He saw Blanche Sumnor constantly, and the might of her beauty came against him and most completely overthrew him; and all the while there ached at his heart a sense that evil was fated to come of it if he let himself make love to this girl. I can tell you those were not easy days that Mr. Everard Hunt had to live through.

He awoke every morning with the most excellent intentions. He *would* leave the house. All the same, he did *not*. And then one night near the end of May he chanced, after dinner, to enter the dining-room unaccompanied by his kind host. The light was failing; still, it was clear enough for him to see by whom the room was tenanted.

They had the apartment to themselves. In the trees outside the birds were getting ready for nesting, and were busy wishing each other good night.

Hunt had been waging, as we know, hot battle with himself, and now, as it so often happens, his heart suddenly capitulated without resistance. He simply came in and sat down beside her, and said—

"I am so glad to find you here, for I was feeling so dreadfully sad and lonely."

"I am sorry if you are unhappy," she said.

"You are?"

"Do you think you need ask?"

"Oh, Blanche, Blanche!"

Then hands clasped hands, and lips clove unto lips, and the moon looked in, and it was all doubtless very nice and romantic for the time being. The next day Hunt awoke with a dreadful presentiment of evil. He thought he would tell Blanche about his dream, and hear what she had to say. Then to his morbid imagination it seemed

that she would shrink from him as from a murderer, and he did not tell her. He was madly in love with her, yet he could not escape from the memory of that dream. When his hand touched her throat a shiver went through him.

His health remained indifferent, and he became moody and excitable.

Dr. and Mrs. Sumnor were well pleased when they heard the turn things had taken.

"Oh, why do you seem so unhappy?" Blanche asked him one day. "Are you sorry that you asked me to be your wife?"

"I love you desperately," he answered, "but, Blanche, I believe evil will come of our marriage!"

"Are you mad?" she said, with something like contempt in her tone.

"Perhaps I am. God knows!" and he left her suddenly.

Dr. Sumnor practised his highest medical skill, but with no good effect. Despite his apparent cause for happiness, Everard Hunt remained a moody and excitable man.

The marriage was fixed to take place in October, and in July the Sumnors and Langstones, accompanied by Hunt, revisited St. Roche. Hunt, remembering his dream, would have shunned the place; but Blanche had taken a romantic whim into her head, so of course he could say nothing; and one day they found themselves again in the vine-covered courtyard of the hotel.

"Are you glad to be back with me in the old place?" she asked him that night, as they walked up and down the terrace bathed in the glory of an opaline sunset, and listening to the thrilling music of the band.

And he answered, "Blanche, Blanche, you know I love you, but my heart is weighed down by a sense of ill!"

"You are ill," she said soothingly; "that is all!"

He had written ghastly stories, but never anything so ghastly as the experience through which he was now passing. He loved this woman desperately, and yet it seemed to him that a prohibition had been put upon his marrying her. Now in the bright sunlight that dreadful dream confronted him, and he saw the seemingly dead face, the blood running from her throat, and himself standing there, knife in hand.

"Darling, what is making you so unhappy?" his beloved would ask him. "You look as if you were haunted!"

"So I am!" he answered, and broke away from her.

They had been at St. Roche about a week when a strange thing happened. Hunt had been one day for a long solitary walk, and returned to the hotel shortly before *table-d'hôte*. In the courtyard he met Blanche Sumnor and her friend Miss Langstone.

"Who was that handsome man you were with about half-an-hour ago?" began his fiancée. "Violet has quite lost her heart to him, and I have very nearly."

"I have been with no handsome companion," he answered, a good deal surprised. "I have spoken to no one since I went out, except a little fisher-boy, of whom I asked my way."

"But, my dear Mr. Hunt," exclaimed Miss Langstone, "we saw you."

"Then it was an apparition, foretelling my speedy death!" he said with a laugh, and yet painfully impressed.

That something dreadful would happen he felt sure, but to confide in any one would do no good. He had consulted a London doctor, who had laughed at him, told him to drink less tea, and take plenty of exercise, and leave all work alone. He obeyed these injunctions; all the same, he could not throw off the sense of impending ill, any more than one can shake off that nameless feeling of bodily discomfort which precedes a serious illness.

They were still laughing over the "apparition" when Dr. Sumnor came up, and broke in with—

"I tried to attract your attention just now, my dear boy, but you were so absorbed in your new friend that there was no making you hear or see. Fine-looking fellow he is."

Again Hunt disclaimed having had any companion that day; and everybody agreed it was very strange.

To the end of his life Hunt will remember that evening.

Blanche had never seemed more adorable to him, and never had he so shuddered at the thought of the fate which it seemed to him that marriage must bring upon them.

"Will you tell me now," she said, leaning both hands upon his arm, "why you left here last September so suddenly, just as you were beginning to care about me?"

"I feared I should care too much!"

"But you knew that I cared too?"—these words spoken in a tone of low penetrating sweetness.

"I may have hoped."

"Have hoped? You knew! We both knew at once. Why did you go?"

"Blanche, I may tell you some time, but not now! Trust me, sweetheart!"

Just then the instruments, which had been conferring softly one with another, clashed and thundered out together as in mighty exultation.

"Come down to the shore," he said, "where I can put my arms round you, and kiss your dear lips!" and, nothing loth, she did as he wished; and they sat some time by the sea in a paradise of love and darkness. I suppose they were no less foolish than most lovers! At length they had to join the rest of their party, after which there came the final leave-taking in the courtyard.

The night was intensely hot. For Hunt sleep was out of the question, and he sat long by his window listening to the sea as it came washing softly on the beach, on which shone down the white moon and the steadfast stars.

The church clock had just chimed two, and he had turned from the window with the thought of at least undressing, when he heard steps moving stealthfully down the passage in which his room was situated, as well as the rooms of the Sumnor family. The hotel closed its doors at almost primitive hours. He listened with rapt attention. The steps seemed to hesitate outside his own door; then they passed on. A dreadful horror seemed to take him by the throat, and almost stifled him. Candle in hand, he opened his door, in time to see a door at the further end of the passage open and close. It was the door of Blanche's room.

Quick as thought he followed in the track of those muffled steps, to that door. To enter that room was an extreme step, but he saw no other course. The door was only pushed close, not latched; he threw it open—and there he saw the fulfilment of his dream!

Stretched out upon the bed lay the beautiful figure of Blanche Sumnor, the face deathly pale, blood trickling from her throat, while over the body, knife in hand, stood his own counterpart!

In his dream he had not been able to speak or move, but that was not so now! He sprang forward, seized the man, and dragged him back, shouting for help the while. The captured man made no struggle—indeed, he seemed in a dazed condition, hardly able to realize what was going on. Dr. Sumnor rushed to the spot.

He found his daughter had only fainted, probably from fright, and that her throat had happily been only slightly gashed, though murder would doubtless have been accomplished had Hunt not arrived upon the scene so opportunely.

"It is wonderful—wonderful!" he said; "the dream has been realized! My love is saved, and the spell is broken!"

The would-be murderer proved, on investigation, to be an escaped lunatic, of homicidal tendencies, his resemblance to Hunt being one of those unaccountable likenesses which do exist sometimes, and not only in fiction, as I have good reason for knowing. Blanche's wound, being merely superficial, healed rapidly, and, when in October these two were married, he told her why he had left St. Roche so suddenly; and she said, when she had shivered a little and kissed him—

"You foolish boy!"

But, all the same, it was curious!



THE POET IN EXILE.

▲ PERSONAL REMINISCENCE.

BY VERNON ISMAY.

IT was during his sojourn in Guernsey that I first met Victor Hugo. He was then hale and vigorous, with the bearing of a man of thirty, and a brow heightened and ennobled by the sparseness of the once ample locks that David d'Angers has immortalized in his magnificent marble—an Olympian presentment of the poet as he was in 1844, when already famous as the author of the dramas *Cromwell* (notable for a Preface artfully designed as a vehicle for the promulgation of the revolutionary theories so triumphantly reduced to practice in subsequent works), *Marion Delorme*, *Hernani*, *Le Roi s'Amuse*, *Lucrèce Borgia*, *Angelo*, *Marie Tudor*, *Ruy Blas*, and *Les Burgraves*; of the *Odes et Ballades* (the first volume of which appeared in 1822), inspired by Lamartine's celebrated *Méditations Poétiques*; the *Orientales*, and the *Feuilles d'Automne*; the *Chants du Crépuscule*, *Voix Intérieures*, and *Rayons et les Ombres*; and numerous works of fiction, including *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Claude Gueux*, and *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*. If his brow was intellectual then, it

revealed potentialities of intellect in its later development, suggesting in its every protuberance a brain expanded to the utmost capability of a head that could scarcely be designated small, albeit not excessively large—two extremes that both tend to the same low level of intellectuality, and are therefore equally impossible in the man of genius.

Until I saw Victor Hugo I never perfectly realized the aptness of the Greek poet's daring figure—imitated by Virgil and nearly every succeeding poet (I quote from the First Book of the *Iliad*, wherein occurs the description of the wrath of Agamemnon)—

ὅσσε δέ οι πυρὶ λαμπτέωντι ἔκτην.

The "living fire" did literally flash from his eyes at times; at others it burned clear and still as a vestal flame; but it was always there in a degree to which I do not remember to have witnessed in the eyes of any other person.

His voice was deep and rich—a voice with a command of expression as infinite as that of the mighty ocean itself; now surging hoarsely in the vehemence of its wrath, now hushed to a mere tranquil whisper; eloquent of hate and love, hope and despair, joy and sorrow, life, death, and the immortality beyond. And over this "ocean of splendour and harmony" I was permitted to float, borne whithersoever the current tugged; incapable of directing my own course and not wishing to direct it—a waif, whose mental mobility, nay, whose very heart-beats, were regulated solely in response to the leaping and surging of those relentless tides. Yet though he that listened was so completely enthralled by that wonderful voice, he that used it had it absolutely under his control, in which, no doubt, lay the secret of its omnipotence.

In my opinion his manner of enunciation was only excelled by the matter he enunciated. He was, I should say, one of the few exceptions to that very general rule that declares a good writer to be seldom a good reader. I can imagine how one of his poems, read by himself, would have thus gained yet new beauty, opulent as they all are with magnificent sentiments and images, expressed in language as fanciful and ornate as a setting of Persian filigree work that is a veritable marvel apart from the jewels it enshrines.

This particular day of which I speak was, I remember, one on which it had seemed blessed to be, if but for the mere sake of being. The sunlight that filled the heavens, and lay in broad patches on meadow-land, and vineyard, and garden, and flashed on the rippling waters of the island-dotted Channel until they seemed crusted with tremulous jewels, had power to penetrate even to the soul. Birds were singing, lambs baaing, and a soft breeze whispering to whomsoever chose to listen. Guernsey was Arcadia for the nonce, and I its most favoured denizen.

After an exchange of formal greetings, which were yet not formal coming from lips so gracious as his, Victor Hugo said—

"The day is too delightful, too heavenly, to be disturbed by the echoes of party strife. Let us eschew any reference to things political and concern ourselves only with literature *pur et simple*, and whatever relates thereto."

I was more than agreeable, for (to be candid) politics are not much in my vein—and I think they were hardly in Victor Hugo's either. What a golden opportunity was this! To be able to sit and listen to the greatest figure of his age decanting on the art that he revolutionized—at least as far as his own country was concerned—to be fired by his irresistible enthusiasm, and transported by the matchless splendour of his language when not convinced by the ingenuity of his arguments; to be dazzled by the radiance of his wit, and blinded by the tears of his pathos—this was good fortune indeed! How many persons will envy me as they read; and how impenetrable the gloom that falls about me when I reflect that I shall never have a like opportunity again!

Of course I cannot enumerate here even a tenth part of the literary topics touched upon in that memorable two hours' conversation. I am painfully aware of the loss that must result from reproducing such a conversation—or, rather, the valuable portion thereof, in the form of a mere *résumé*—and that, too, a *résumé* in English of a conversation originally uttered in French. And of all the French ever written or spoken, Victor Hugo's is the most individual—provokingly so, I have sometimes heard English readers say. I cannot go with them thus far, but I may remark that those more pronounced idiosyncrasies of style resented by readers on this side of the Channel were less conspicuous in his conversation than in his writings. It will be understood that I now refer to his *prose* writings.

There was no attempt at consecutiveness or chronological arrangement in these off-hand analyses, comparisons, and reminiscences, but subject followed subject with dazzling rapidity, producing a chromoscopic diversity of form and colour. Prose, poetry, philosophy, the drama and its interpreters, critics, criticism, and hyper-criticism—such were the various themes introduced. At one moment you were laughing at the obstinate conservatism of some academical pedant of the old régime prior to the battle of "Hernani" and the defeat of the classicists; at the next you were transported by a prosopopoeiacal description—a portrait drawn from characteristic features of style and matter—of one of the Titans of ancient literature. The poets whose names were mentioned and whose chief excellences and defects were discussed between us, began with Homer and ended with those identified more especially with the latter half of the present century. Thus most of the representative names of the poetical hierarchy were in turn passed under review, and there was nothing that Victor Hugo said about them which was not novel and ingenious, or so ingeniously expressed as to appear absolutely novel.

I am convinced that the great Frenchman's literary judgments were always the result of strong conviction and utterly unprejudiced, the *furia Francese* being reserved for political occasions only. He was always ready to acknowledge genius of whatever nationality, but if that nationality were French, of course so much the better. Because his Gallic origin is stamped as a hall-mark on well-nigh every page that he wrote; because he loved France generally, and Paris in particular, with a love that was a species of idolatry; because throughout his whole career—a career of political metamorphoses—he was ever a Frenchman first

and a politician afterwards; surely this is not a proof that he regarded others than his countrymen as outer barbarians, or that he ignored merit because its fortunate possessor happened not to be also a Frenchman? As well say that his own vigorous Alexandrines were intended as a protest against the Greek hexameter and the English heroic couplet. Those who knew him best will not, I feel sure, hesitate to agree with me in saying that his political prejudices and occasional ignorance of foreign history, customs, manners, and even topography (especially as regards England), were never suffered to influence his literary judgments or impair his critical integrity. For Victor Hugo was a "literary man" to the tips of his fingers; all the literary men of the inhabited globe were his brothers; to have objected to this one or that on the score of an "accident of birth" would have been quite incompatible with such a lofty character as that of the Gallic "Leviathan of Literature."

The account of his struggle with, and ultimate victory over, the classicists was given with such vivid force that the well-known incidents of that desperate campaign seemed to be re-enacted before me as I listened. The frantic opposition of the Académie, who fought as savage hordes are wont to fight, making blind rushes at the serried ranks of their indomitable adversaries, vainly brandishing their primitive weapons of warfare, and constantly falling victims to superior strategy; the red-hot enthusiasm of the revolutionary party, who regarded their leader as a god, and his mission as a crusade against a pagan host, whose chief idols were those twin embodiments of Academic idiom, Messieurs Delille and De Jouy, and whose great high-priest was the conservative Boileau; the condemnation that spared neither substance nor manner, nor let one little rhyme, nor metaphor, nor trope escape; the fanatical devotion that held each thought, each word, as a standard to rally round and fight for, until it should be finally planted on the enemy's stronghold: all these things were recapitulated with infinite verve and unmistakable relish. How his rule was finally established, and how he further justified his daring innovations and the boundless confidence of his followers and companions-in-arms by every fresh work that he produced, everybody knows. Everybody knows, also, what magnificent state the laurel-crowned monarch kept in his luxuriously appointed town villa (until obliged to abandon the beloved capital whose spacious boulevards and formal avenues he exchanged for the island home wherein I first met him) looked upon by the worshipful eyes of the civilized world, and having for his foremost disciples Alfred de Musset and Alexandre Dumas *père* (who were in some sort his precursors), along with Sainte-Beuve and the fastidious Alfred de Vigny. Worthy disciples, indeed! who would have been rulers had they belonged to any other age than that which Victor Hugo so completely dominated.

That the great Frenchman perfectly well knew and appreciated his own superlative merits, and was intolerant of even the mildest form of criticism, cannot, I think, be denied. He was no Shakespeare, ignorant of the greatness of his works and the immortality they were destined to achieve. It could never have been written of Victor Hugo as Pope, in his "Imitation of the First Epistle of the

Second Book of Horace," addressed to Augustus, has written of the Bard of Avon :-

Shakespeare (whom you and ev'ry Playhouse bill
Style the Divine, the Matchless, what you will),
For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight,
And grew immortal in his own desp'to.

On the contrary, conscious as he was of being the foremost man of his time, Victor Hugo was yet careful never to miss an opportunity of extending his popularity. It will perhaps be said that when all the world is practically unanimous in its praises, it would be a species of egotism not to accept the world's laudatory verdict. Certainly, Victor Hugo could not be accused of this kind of egotism; he frankly allowed the world to be fulfilling its duty by making himself the object of its applause. Had the applause been downright condemnation instead, his opinion would not have been modified one whit thereby. This quality of audacious self-confidence is admirably illustrated in the boy of fifteen competing for a prize offered by the Académie; and its justification may be found in the sequel—an award of honourable mention. Yes,

The Life to come, in ev'ry Poet's Creed

was very clearly defined to the eyes of Victor Hugo.

His tone was one rather of commiseration than anger when he spoke of the non-academic dissenters from the orthodox belief in himself and his works. I have no doubt that he sincerely pitied them as suffering from an organically defective mental system—in so far as their appreciation of himself and his works was concerned. He was quite willing to distinguish between this class of critics and those actuated by envy or malice. In short, his soreness under criticism is not attributable to wounded vanity or a love of contention for contention's sake, but an honest belief in his own infallibility. In these contests he believed himself to be acting strictly on the defensive. He felt himself to be smarting under an injury—albeit ignorantly inflicted: hence that haughty, resentful attitude which some have designated egotism, and others, downright pugnacity.

To many minds this blindness to his faults will furnish a proof of a want of exact balance in the illustrious poet's own mental system. Granted that it is so: Shakespeare himself was not free from the same kind of insanity; the principal point of difference between the two cases being that, whereas Victor Hugo was unable to appreciate his own faults, Shakespeare was unable to appreciate his own merits. It may even be urged that in this boundless self-esteem Victor Hugo furnished an incontrovertible proof of the fact that he was entirely deficient in one of the most infallible tokens of true genius. He lacked the humility of greatness. It is only in the nature of things that a man whose character affords so many exceptional traits should be exceptional in this also. And, instead of the humility supposed to be inseparable from greatness, we find a lofty egotism, a sublime faith in the perfection of his achievement, a conviction that, within the prescribed limits, even his least important creation was incomparable.

Unlike "blind Homer," Dante, Milton, and the

youthful poet of *Endymion*, the "Adonais" of Shelley's immortal elegy, Victor Hugo lived to enjoy the fruits of his fame in overflowing measure. Indeed, his divine mission was recognized almost directly he began to speak. Such a man can never lack posthumous honours; but the bare expectation of posthumous honours is somewhat meagre fare. Year by year Victor Hugo managed to increase his popularity; and it is certain that at the time of his lamented death the captious criticism of his early experience had sensibly diminished.

Those fortunate individuals who have, at some period or other, shaken hands, conversed, and, maybe, broken bread with the departed sage, orator, poet, dramatist, and novelist, will be able to realize to the full the costly nature of the boon thus conferred and its influence on the recipient now that he has passed beyond our sight and hearing. To know that you have seen with your bodily eyes and heard with your bodily ears the author of *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables*, *Les Contemplations*, *La Légende des Siècles*, *Les Châtiments*, *L'Année Terrible*, *L'Art d'Etre Grand-père*, and *La Pitié Suprême*—the marvellous enchanter who called into being such familiar characters as Quasimodo, Marius, Jean Valjean, Didier, Doña Sol, Esmeralda, and Thisbé, is to know the possession of a lifelong joy, that shall be cherished as a priceless heirloom by after generations. It is this belief in the value of anything—even the most trifling personal reminiscence—connected with the life of a great man that has induced me to pen these pages.

And Victor Hugo's life was exceptionally rich in materials for the biographer: so much so, indeed, that were his works at the present moment as traditional as those of Epimenides, his personal history would still constitute a most interesting narrative. On the other hand, had those same works issued from the obscurity of a garret, their intrinsic merits would have sufficed of themselves to earn instant recognition. For, imposing as was Victor Hugo's personality, his fame was never actually dependent on an imposing personality—as was Richard Wagner's, for example. So long as Victor Hugo was in life, the work and the man divided attention; now that the man is gone, the work remains as an imperishable monument of Gallic genius in the nineteenth century.

A detailed account of the great poet's opinions concerning some of the authors whose works had come under his notice, and especially those belonging to the so-called "Romantic" schools of England and Germany, with other topics of general interest, which formed the subjects of this and subsequent conversations, I shall reserve for the more extended work that I contemplate bringing out. The present paper is merely an inadequate tribute of reverence and affection hastily prepared while there was yet time, as it were, to lay it on the open bier of the illustrious dead; and therefore should be accepted as an introduction to the larger work that is to follow.



ON THE VERGE.

I.

BY the ocean's edge on a lone beach far from
the mooring
Of the humblest link in the lives of land and
sea—
The fisher fleet—where homeward the wild birds
flee,
Shall a wanderer pause, and heed the strange
conjuring
Of a spirit as sad and lone and desolate as he.

II.

Oh, a wild waste beach, afar from the toilers
lying,
Seems an outthrown stretch of the mystic No
Man's Land,
With its limit undefined : an unmarked strand
That gives and takes, with the will of the waves
complying—
Except where a sullen rock will frown o'er the
sunken sand.

III.

Shall a village bell, when the wail of the wind is
dulling,
Break softly there on the sid wayfarer's ears—
It seems but the sound of a sea rung chime he
hears :
Shall a cry from the land be borne to the waves
that are lulling—
"Tis not of life to him—but a memory of years.

IV.

Oh, hast thou a joy that a world-born fate with-
holdeth—
A love whose heav'n were to be desolate and
free ?
Here, as immortals dwell, would love and thee :
Here, love were the latest scroll which the seer
unfoldeth ;
And ye, awed mystics of the Soul and of the
Sea !

J. ROY NICOLSON.

BROWN FROM LONDON.

BY FRANCIS WATT.

IT was a terribly hot afternoon early in July, and Wilson and I, not knowing very well what to do with ourselves, were lazily leaning over the parapet of the bridge which crosses the Neckar at Heidelberg. We were both Oxford men, and students of the same college, we were both barristers of the Inner Temple, we had both a very little money and a very great deal of time at our disposal. If I add that we had both muddled our heads with German beer and German metaphysics till nothing would serve us but a period of residence in Heidelberg, that most beautiful of German towns, to which we had now, on the first convenient opportunity, betaken ourselves, and that my name was Frederick Jones, I have said all that seems necessary for the proper comprehension of my story.

Our residence abroad (how many expatriated

Britons, if they told the truth, would make the same confession) was not a success. Heidelberg, its castle and its environs, were indeed in their own way perfect; but even scenery palls, and we already knew every spot within a circuit of ten miles. We were not very comfortable in our lodgings, we did not care for the people, the wooden formality of whose politeness we found very tiresome. We cordially agreed that the German beer of Heidelberg was not nearly so good as the German beer of London, and unfortunately Kant, and Fichte, and Schelling, and Hegel derived no aid from local associations—they were quite as unintelligible in the land of their birth as they had even been in England. No doubt we were unjust. All our discontent was "the imposthume," if not of "much wealth," yet of "much ease." We had nothing to do, and the novelty of our lives had worn off, whilst only the discomfort remained.

So it was, however, as we lolled there listlessly in the heat, and sauntered up and down the green banks of the Neckar, till evening came, and we betook ourselves to the well-known café Leer in the *Hauptstrasse*, to take as usual our evening meal. It was now cooler, and we were refreshed; but this only gave us strength to discuss our grievances at things in general. We regretted that we had not gone to Paris, and then we both began to sing the praises of dear old smoky London. We condemned the *Hauptstrasse*, as we thought of the Strand, and what was the castle compared to the Tower; even the famed philosopher's walk amidst the vineyards on the hills by the Neckar, was poor when compared to the road between Hampstead and Highgate. Then we discussed our future occupations. Should we go a-rowing on the Neckar by moonlight? No, said Wilson, the evening was stifling hot. Ought we to see our friend the Doctor, and ask him to smuggle us into the great hall at the *Hirschgasse*, where half-a-dozen students were already paired to slash each other on the morrow? Wilson said that German students' duels were all humbug, not at all equal to a good football match under Rugby rules, not half so exciting or anything like so dangerous. There was to be some classical music performed, in an hour or so, at the castle gardens; what more delightful than to sit under the trees in the warm summer night and listen to the melodies of Mozart or Mendelssohn? But Wilson crushed this plan with the almost brutal remark that we had not come abroad to listen to a German band! We laughed at this ridiculous association of ideas, but agreed at any rate that we would not climb the castle hill that night.

And so, for want of anything better to do, we sat on. Before us, on the little marble table, was our half-consumed bottle of *Markgräfler* (so they call the Palatinate wine). The air was heavy with an after-dinner odour, mixed with a flavour of raw sausages, and old, very old, cheese. This and everything else bored us. The incessant talking of the different groups, the click of the billiard balls from a table in the corner, the hum of voices in the streets, were one and all a vexation. We were, or at least I was, in the state that men are in when they do desperate deeds. The morrow would probably have seen us en route for London, to spend the long vacation in town, but the fates had something far different in store for me. I gazed

at the badly printed piece of paper that did duty for a newspaper, my eye caught a name, and I formed a resolution.

"Let us call," I said, "on Brown from London."

"Brown from London! who on earth is he?" returned Wilson, opening his eyes.

"Look for yourself," I said.

Wilson took the paper, turned to the place I indicated, which was in fact the part devoted to the announcement of the arrival of strangers, and read out, from the list of names of those staying at the Prince Karl hotel, "Brown mit Familie aus London," that is, Brown and family from London, and that was all!

Wilson looked mystified for a moment, and then said, "Oh! I see what you mean. We are to divert ourselves, or try it at any rate, by going to the Prince Karl, and attempting to force ourselves on some ridiculous pretext on an English family. Well, I won't, and you can't. You haven't the courage, the address, the impudence, if you like to call it."

This of course was said in a bantering manner, but it was not the less irritating for all that; and so what had been more than half a joke became a firm resolution.

"You may do as you like, but I'll call on Brown, and this very evening too."

"You won't," said Wilson, decidedly.

"I will," I replied, more decidedly.

Now Wilson was an amateur (a very amateur, I used to tell him) sportsman; he was given to occasional betting, and he invariably lost. This had not cured him, however, and he now with singular promptitude produced a little manuscript book to which a pencil was attached. "Such statements," he remarked, with an air of judicial gravity (if Wilson is ever elevated to the bench, he will at least look the part), "are best put at once to a proper test. I will wager you five pounds that you will not call on Brown, be well received, and leave after a decent interval."

"Wilson," I replied, severely, "as you are well aware, I never bet (Wilson's countenance fell); but I will on this occasion accept your proposal (Wilson beamed) on condition, however, that the loser pays the money to some deserving public charity!" (Wilson's countenance again fell, and I thought I heard the sound of a sigh). This might have been fancy, however; at any rate he accepted the condition, and I, having made a hasty toilet, set off eastward along the *Hauptstrasse* to fulfil my mission.

Now I confess that as I walked along I felt by no means easy in my mind. What I was about to do was perhaps not quite gentlemanly; this Brown, no doubt a fair specimen of an average British paterfamilias, was not at all likely to be a man who would stand nonsense. I had some notion of pretending that I knew a family of Browns in London (in fact I knew several), and had called on the chance that they might be the same; but the scheme seemed to be more and more ridiculous, and when I at length arrived at the door of the Prince Karl, I was inclined to draw back, and meekly hand over the forfeit to the "deserving charity." As I half turned, who should I see but Wilson, who had evidently followed me? He was standing at a little distance, apparently watching the effect of the sunset on the castle; but I knew he was really watching me!

It was like a spur to a horse. What! fly in presence of the enemy? Never. I jumped up the steps of the hotel, gave my card to one of the waiters, and asked him to take it up to Herr Brown from London. He went away, and returning almost immediately, requested me to follow. He preceded me up the staircase, stopped on the first landing, walked along one of those interminable hotel corridors, and showed me, with a profusion of bowing and scraping into one of the rooms.

It was large and comfortable, well lighted by two large windows that looked on the street, and occupied by a middle-aged lady, who, to my intense amazement and relief, received me with the most extreme cordiality; almost rushed to meet me, shook me warmly by the hand, and before I could say a word, began:

"How do you do, Mr. Jones? How pleased I am to see you. We knew you were travelling in Germany, but thought you had gone to Hanover. Didn't you say you were going a walking tour in the Harz Mountains?"

Hardly knowing what to make of this, I muttered something about change of plans, and began to reflect where had I met Mrs. Brown before. I had plenty of time for reflection, for Mrs. Brown, after remarking that young men were very changeable, said:

"But, do you know, we have had such a number of adventures in this first visit of ours to Germany!" seated herself near me in one of the windows, and began a minute and exact record of the "adventures," as she called the pettiest details of continental travel, at most inordinate length. She was a woman of fifty, inclined to be stout, had considerable remnants of good looks, was dressed correctly and talked correctly also. She was in every respect quite ladylike, seemed good-natured; but, let me add, not particularly acute or sensible, and the torrent of words which she poured forth was out of all proportion to the ideas that floated in them. This, however, was very welcome to me, as it gave me an opportunity of considering the situation. I very soon came to the conclusion that I had never seen Mrs. Brown before. There was then a mistake on her part, but how I could not exactly tell. I ought of course to have made some sort of explanation, and retired; but then what was I to explain? The very explanation would have been rude, and so the first misdemeanour on my part led to others, for I found myself listening with the most interested air imaginable to Mrs. Brown's family confidences. That good lady was evidently of an unsuspecting nature, for she continued to talk in the most intimate manner. I would, however, have done something to cut the interview short, had it not been for Wilson, who seemed likely to prove my evil genius in the matter. He had taken up his position on the other side of the street, and was intently watching the hotel, from which he evidently expected to see me ejected. After some time his eye happened to fall on the window where I was seated, and the expression of intense astonishment that came over his face as he saw me drinking a cup of tea (which Mrs. Brown had poured out for me), and engaged in friendly conversation with a middle-aged lady, almost drove me into fits of laughter. Fortunately, Mrs. Brown's conversation was enlivened by a number of very small witticisms; and though she seemed a little aston-

ished at the exuberant mirth I exhibited, she evidently put it down to these, and seemed not at all displeased. I, in full view of Wilson, apparently exhibited the most intense interest in all she said; whilst I watched with no small delight the comical expression of dismay which took possession of his countenance.

I soon, however, had other things to think of; for Mrs. Brown, after having rambled on in the most irrelevant way, happened for the first time to take a good look at me, and burst out: "Dear me, Mr. Jones, you have changed to be sure. I should never have known you. And in a few months, too!"

I was caught now, I thought, but the good lady went on:

"A different suit of clothes does make a great difference," I eagerly assented. "And then you do not shave now." That, of course, I hastened to add made all the difference in the world. But one rock was no sooner cleared than another presented itself.

"And how do you like St. Thomas's hospital?" Why, what could I like about it, I thought. "Oh! of course, it must be the architectural effect; so I said that the river front, seen from Westminster Bridge, was very fine.

Mrs. Brown laughed very heartily at this.

"Oh, the same old joker still; of course you know I mean how do you like your classes there?"

"Why, I'm at no classes there, I'm a lawyer."

"A lawyer! dear me! how odd. But I thought you told us last Christmas that, having got your degree at Cambridge, you were going to study medicine at St. Thomas's; but my memory is not so good as it was. At any rate when you have passed—for of course you're going to be a barrister—you must get Mr. Brown, or his partner, Mr. Ferniger, to get you some briefs. You remember Mr. Ferniger? you sat next him last Christmas at dinner. Rather a hot-tempered man, like Mr. Brown himself," added the lady with a smile; "but both very, *very* good when once you know them."

Now all this was as a constant succession of shocks to me. In the first place, I was evidently taken for some medical student, an acquaintance of the family, of the same name as myself, and also a traveller in Germany. In the second place the firm of Brown and Ferniger was very well known to me by name as having a large and highly respectable and long established family practice. In the third place the information as to the warmth of Mr. Brown's temper was most unwelcome.

"He was out walking with the girls," Mrs. Brown said; he would, she assured me, be immediately, and would be very glad to see me. I, on the other hand, was quite convinced that he would at once expel me. No doubt the story would get into legal circles, and would stick to me all my life. I was almost inclined to rush from the room without a word of explanation; but steps were heard, the door opened, and several people appeared. "There they are," said Mrs. Brown. At last, I mournfully reflected. I hardly dared to raise my eyes, though when I did so, I saw that for some reason I had a still further respite. I saw before me two English girls. One was a mere child of eight or nine years, whose most prominent feature, as it then struck me, was a pair of large eyes fixed shyly on me. Her sister

was a young lady about twenty, who, if not good looking, was decidedly prepossessing. Her mouth was perhaps a little large, and her nose, if anything, inclined to turn up; but she had pretty wavy hair, beautiful teeth, and her brown eyes (eyes were evidently a strong point in the Brown family) had an honest and straightforward look which would have charmed me under ordinary circumstances; but which, as it was, made me think how scornfully they would soon look at me.

"You have not, Mr. Jones;" said Mrs. Brown, "met my eldest daughter before? she was away from home last Christmas." I said I had not, and bowed; so did the young lady; "but Carry," she continued, "why don't you speak, child; surely you remember Mr. Jones, with whom you used to romp so?"

Carry was evidently dubious, but she came forward to where I was. I patted her on the head, and bent down and kissed her, this being, I supposed, the orthodox way of treating little girls. The child shrank from me a little, but said nothing. She went back and stood quietly beside the chair her mother had taken, keeping her eyes still fixed on me.

"But where have you left your father?" said Mrs. Brown.

"Oh, just as we were entering the hotel, we met Mr. Gaston, the American gentleman, with whom father has struck up an acquaintance. He was going for a drive along the Bergstrasse to Weinheim, and he persuaded father to go with him. They said they would be back in a little more than an hour."

Here, again, was another chance for me—I did not know it was my last—of retiring, after a few suitable words, from the scene; but these "few more words," spoken to an intelligent and attractive young lady, had a fatal tendency to extend themselves. Miss Brown was an enthusiast for German poetry; and where is German poetry to be discussed, if not at Heidelberg? On the other side of the Neckar was the Mountain of All Saints, forming the frontier of the mysterious Odenwald, where so many of the chief incidents in the famous old epic of the *Niebelungenlied* are laid. There, too, was the castle of the wild huntsman, and an almost infinite number of objects of literary and legendary interest. The neighbouring Neckar and the not distant Rhine, are "crowned with vocal reeds" as surely as ever "smooth sliding Mincius" was. However, this is somewhat of a digression; suffice it to say that we were soon engaged in an interesting conversation on these topics, during which the minutes fled all too swiftly past.

The conversation was not at all to the taste of Mrs. Brown, who was very fond of talking, and knew nothing of German; and she made at length a desperate attempt to interrupt. She began to discuss a number of common friends, as she was pleased to term various individuals, whose names I now learned for the first time. I answered quite at random, and of course "plunged" terribly. This did not greatly matter as far as Mrs. Brown was concerned, for that good lady rattled heedlessly on, paying but the scantiest attention to my remarks. Among her other qualifications was a slight deafness; and this led her to pass over my mistakes, and misinterpret my answers.

As regards her daughter, the case was different.

Miss Brown, I soon felt, was listening to my replies with the utmost amazement; and this made me "plunge" still more fearfully. Then her sister, who had kept her eyes on me all the time, and who, being a sharp child, had evidently come to the conclusion that I had *not* romped with her last Christmas, began to whisper something (what could it be but her conviction of this?) into her sister's ear, who started, reddened, and looked at me very intently. Finally, the little girl went and produced a small album, which contained, I guessed, a photograph of the original Jones. Her sister looked at it for a little, then sharply shut it. The click of the brass clasp meant something decided. I blushed up to the very roots of my hair, for none of this by-play had escaped me. I knew she had observed me, and she knew that I knew it. I knew that *something* was going to happen in a few minutes; but first, by accident or design, the decks were cleared of the non-combatants. Miss Carrie was at once packed off to bed; to which that young lady retired after a most disdainful glance at me. Then, Mrs. Brown, being still under the vague impression that I was in some way connected with medicine, went to get some foreign drugs which she had in her bedroom, and of which she demanded an extempore analysis. The moment she had left the room, Miss Brown turned and looked me full in the face.

"There is something here, Mr.—I suppose I must call you Mr. Jones—that I do not understand. You are evidently not the Mr. Jones we used to know; and yet you are introduced to me as being him. Now I did not wish to say anything before my mother, who is nervous. Besides, a scene is best avoided. You are evidently well educated; you look like a gentleman, in fact. I don't understand the matter at all; will you please explain who you are, and why you are here?"

I felt that I was caught at last. I fidgeted, stammered, and at length, taking what was the only honest course, I told the truth.

How stupid and shabby had been my conduct, I now saw, for the first time, with sufficient clearness; and my auditor saw it very plainly too!

"There is no need for me, Mr. Jones," she said, "to express my opinion as to your very strange conduct in this matter. I must leave that to your own feelings when you have thought it over; my father will of course hear about this; and as your address is, I see, on your card, he may think it desirable to communicate with you. At any rate, it would not be at all pleasant if he should meet you here, so perhaps—"

The hint was plain enough. I took up my hat, and after a renewed attempt at an apology, to which Miss Brown listened with some impatience, was moving towards the door, when Mrs. Brown returned, carrying with her what appeared to be a miniature medicine chest. She refused to permit me to go, thrust me back into my chair, and proceeded to discuss drugs, of which I knew little, and acquaintances of which I knew nothing, with the greatest relish. The next quarter-of-an-hour is still present to my memory, as decidedly the most uncomfortable I ever spent. Mr. Brown was already behind time; and his return, I need scarcely say, was an event that I sincerely dreaded. Mrs. Brown's questions were of the most puzzling description, and my answers were so fearfully at

random, that even she began to express her wonder.

Her daughter listened with some impatience, though not without a considerable deal of amusement. I felt like an actor in some dreary comedy, whose efforts are watched by a hostile audience, who laugh at but not with him. A comedy no doubt it was, but a sudden stroke transformed it into a tragedy!

As I gazed wistfully at the door it opened, and I saw the head waiter. He said nothing, but beckoned to me in an almost frenzied manner. His face was quite pale, and he seemed very disturbed. Something serious had evidently happened. I got up mechanically, and walked towards him. He seized me by the arm and whispered, "Mr. Brown has been from the carriage thrown. He has been killed. He is quite dead."

I still remember how curiously the manner of the announcement seemed, when compared with its matter; I still remember how loud the whisper sounded; too loud, indeed, for the other two inmates of the room had heard. Before I could say or do anything, I heard a terrible scream just behind me, and as I turned round Mrs. Brown fell heavily to the ground in a dead faint! The waiter and I carried her to a sofa; then I looked at Miss Brown. The news seemed absolutely to have petrified her; for she stood without a word, her face quite pale, her eyes wide open, staring before her. Then she seemed to recover herself a little, for she came to me and seized me by the arm.

"I must go to him, Mr. Jones, quick, quick."

"Pray stay here, Miss Brown," I said. "I will go myself, and do everything that can possibly be done."

"No, no," she repeated, in the same almost mechanical way, "I must go quick, quick."

It was no time for debate.

"We shall go together," I replied, briefly.

There were now several people in the room. Various servants, some English ladies, poor Carrie, with a shawl thrown over her, was there too, sobbing by the side of her mother, whom kindly hands were trying to restore to consciousness.

I ordered one of those two-horse vehicles, half cabs, half tourist carriages, which ply in Heidelberg to be called, and in the meantime asked the particulars of the disaster from the man who had brought the news. His story was not very clear. He said that the horse drawing the carriage containing the English party had run away, and that the carriage had been overturned; that all were severely hurt, and that one gentleman, whose name had been given him as Mr. Brown, by one of the party able to speak, had been killed on the spot.

After all, I thought there was great room for mistake in all this; and as I helped Miss Brown into the waggon, and wrapped the hastily assumed cloak more securely about her, I whispered some words of encouragement in her ear. Her white face lost something of its rigidity, the light of hope shone in her eyes; but all she said was, "Be quick! oh! be quick." One thing was yet to be done. I summoned the astonished Wilson from his post of observation, told him that he must go to our friend the doctor, and bring him to Weinheim, where there had been a carriage accident; and then off we dashed over the bridge and along the side of the hill, on the way towards the little

village of Weinheim, which lies some miles from Heidelberg, along the *Bergstrasse*, as the road is called.

It was a beautiful moonlight night, with a soft, pleasant breeze that rustled gently amidst the vines on the mountain. At our feet the Neckar lapped its bank and gurgled along. The gardens were crowded with people, and we heard clearly the refrain of the songs, and the music that accompanied them. As we left the town these sounds died away; but we now heard the song of the nightingales from the thickets. Away before us stretched the white road, along which our galloping horses seemed to move too slowly. The figure at my side was silent, save for a convulsive sob now and then. To me all seemed a sort of dream, in which things were inverted; and the beauty of the night and the sweet sounds that filled it but ugliness and discord. At length we dashed into Weinheim; we were conducted to the inn, led up the narrow staircase into a small bedroom. I did not dare to question those who guided me, nor could I venture to ask Miss Brown to remain below. There pale, insensible, it seemed lifeless, I at length saw Brown from London, whose existence had become, within the last few hours, so closely mixed with mine.

I advanced nearer, but his daughter was before me. She was down on her knees at the bedside; and as she bent over the pale form, she uttered words that were those of hope.

"He breathes! he lives!" she said.

Yes, this was so. The report *had* been exaggerated, the hurt was severe; but, as the village doctor, whom we found there, assured me (and this was confirmed by the doctor from Heidelberg, who soon arrived), there was a strong likelihood of recovery. Only Mr. Brown could not be moved.

I think I can honestly say that during the time that followed, I made myself extremely useful. There was a great deal to be done. The family had to be removed from Heidelberg to Weinheim; there had to be much correspondence with England; and as Mr. Brown slowly recovered, it was necessary to make arrangements for drives and short walks.

In all this, I was the prop, so to speak, of the Brown family. The weeks flew past. Wilson returned to London; but I lingered on between Weinheim and Heidelberg till the stir of vintage time was about the road I travelled daily.

Then at length the doctor said that Mr. Brown might safely venture the journey to England. It did not occur to me to remain longer in Heidelberg, and so I accompanied the family home.

It is not to be expected that our acquaintance would stop here, nor did it. I got to know and like the old gentleman very much. True, he was somewhat passionate; but we have all our little faults, and it would not become me to speak ill of one whom—well, in fact, I expect that in a very short time Brown from London will be my father-in-law!

LUTCHINA;
OR, THE BLUE LAKE.

BY A. ROCKLINGTON.

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PART I.—continued.

CHAPTER IX.

"LET HER ALONE!"

AFTER a pause, Matthias continued:—"See it is just this," he aid, his words gathering force from the hesitancy, "when one loves, the ears and eyes alike grow sharp. Thou art beautiful, Lutchina. Always too beautiful and richly-gifted for such as I. In the old days I knew it well, and though I might not cease to love, I grudged thee never to the Herr Baron. He is kind and good, if sober in years. I said to myself, he is gold where another is dross. Dross, aye, I maintain it!" said the miller, meeting fearlessly a look in the Baroness's eye. "False he was that night he came to us in thunder-rain, and false for all we know he remains. In those old times did not he pass for what he seemed, a painter only? He came and ate of your bread; we asked no questions, but left him to speak, this man who through those summer months slept within a princely home, and owned the land he trod. I felt the falseness if I could not fathom it, and my heart leapt that night he turned for the last time from your door. For I said to myself 'she will forget.' But as the months rolled by and your step grew heavy, I knew that it was not so; you failed to shake off the burden of remembrance, and I knew also that I could never ease it, for thou wert frank with me and said as much. And then came the end when our paths split up. The Baron took you from us, and I was glad. He will smooth away the pain in her breast, said I. But, Lutchina, you came back; and that day you spoke with me at the mill I saw the pain was not gone, and the thought angered me, for the Baron was a good man."

Matthias, his grey eyes clouded, paused, and the Baroness did not answer him. There was a look on her face of set indifference, as if her cup of humiliation being already filled to overflowing it mattered little to her how much deeper grew the draught.

"I think it was but the day after," resumed Matthias, slowly, "that I heard he was returned, this painter, who was not a painter, but our Baron's heir. Since which he has never gone. And now," the miller's voice shook with a sudden tremor, "this is what I willed thee to know, only I could not speak it out at the first: there is one who means thee ill, Lutchina—thou art watched."

The Baroness rose at once to her full height, she looked at Matthias with eyes grown cold and proud, but for all that leaned against the tree like one afraid to fall.

"It is true," said the man, who seemed strangely moved at her stillness. "Thou hast nursed a viper within the Schloss, and it waits but the hour to sting thee. I mean Grutli. She is a wicked girl—she is a devil."

"I understand thee not," said the Baroness.

But something must have struck her like a cold blast, for she trembled.

"No, how should you? God help me, you have been dreaming," answered Matthias. "I have seen you standing motionless under the trees, and I have passed before you, and you have neither seen nor heard me. So has another, but she stole on you from behind with feet as light as forest mice. Once I met her face to face. I laid my two hands on her shoulders and shook her. I could have killed her. She knew it, but she laughed at me."

Matthias twisted his cap angrily between his hands, and a flush rose to his face. Then, before this had time to die away or the pallor on the Baroness's to increase, a little sound stole through the forest which till now had seemed to listen only. Some fallen twigs stirred under a light footfall. Matthias knew it for the stealthy tread of a stoat, but Lutchina, giving a low cry, waited not to hear it again, but fled like a guilty thing.

Matthias looked after her with a heavy sigh. His face was pale and drawn when he again laid the faggot on his shoulder and resumed his walk. Further on it grew more haggard still, for in a clearing of the wood he came suddenly upon Melchior.

The sight of the careless, handsome face brought a menacing frown on that of Matthias. The two, each buried in his own thoughts, had approached unknowingly, and now stared one another in the eyes. Matthias dropped his bundle and strode a step nearer the Count.

"Let her alone!" he said in slow, deep tones.

Melchior looked at the man fronting him in apparent surprise.

"Let her alone—the Baroness!" repeated the miller, his eyes gleaming.

The Count said nothing for a moment; he seemed to be collecting his ideas; then he touched the miller on the breast lightly with his finger.

"When I need thy advice, friend, I will ask for it," was all he said. And with a nod and smile as though to say, "Remember that," he passed on.

CHAPTER X.

THE NIGHT OF THE STORM.

A few hours later on that same day the Baroness left the Schloss once more to take a walk. None seemed to pay her any heed, or to mark her going. In passing from her own room she had gone by the door of the picture gallery; the door was open, and looking in, Lutchina had seen her husband standing there, but his back was turned and he did not appear to have heard the soft rustle of her dress. He was standing with his hands behind his back; his shoulders had a little stoop in them—a new one, or she noticed it now for the first time—and he was looking fixedly at the picture of his dead wife. Over his shoulder the beautiful scornful lips seemed to flash a smile at the pale woman in the doorway, who could not look again, but glided quietly away like a shadow. She crossed some meadow-land, and slipped through a little wood at the back of the keeper's lodge—for the old man himself was lounging by the great gates that opened on to the road—and

so by hidden paths to the wooden bridge that crossed the Lutchina. A figure already stood there—Melchior von Wolfthurm's. The Baroness went slowly forward till she met it, and then paused.

It was a strange-looking evening, this. Old Jossi for some time past had declared the devil to be in the weather. Every day now for some weeks the sun had scorched and the air stagnated, though every morning the snow-mountain had been folded in a little wreath of vapour, which, the peasants held, foretold a storm; and every night a hot, rushing wind had blown—a wind that came straight from the east and brought a flavour as of hot dust into the mouth. Each day the people said "the rain will fall to-morrow," but when the morrow broke, though at dawn the heavens would be filled with scudding clouds, an hour hence they were gone with the wind, the sun blazed forth again, and all was brilliant as yesterday. But the stalled cattle refused their food, and at night those in the meadows roamed about lowing uneasily.

"When the storm comes it will be one to remember," said Jossi to those about him; and pointing to the little halo of red mist through which the sun burnt always, he would add, "I have seen no ring like that round the sun this thirty-four years, and then came a tempest not easily forgotten. I remember it the more as on the night it broke upon us Count Melchior's mother died."

On this evening the hour had not yet come for the wind to blow steadily. It came only in fitful gusts that breathed hotly in the faces of the two on the bridge, and made the trees toss wearily, like live things dreading another night of unrest. When the gusts ceased, silence, like a pall, brooded over the scene; nothing moved but the water, nothing stirred but the mill-wheel; this, indeed, was working still, but so leaden were its movements, so jarring and discordant the sounds it made as it ground its iron teeth into the stream, that one would have deemed the mill, that night, the home of an uneasy spirit.

The Baroness looked around; all was quiet but the mill-wheel and the water; it was a lonely spot, nor could any see her from the mill, for the roadway curved, and she stood where a tangled thicket, growing high above the river's bank, flung a wealth of green across the bridge.

She was the first to speak.

"I am come," she said, "as you willed, Melchior von Wolfthurm. Here on the spot where first we met heart to heart you desired that we should meet again—meet and part."

"Not so," answered the Count; he was leaning against the bridge, his arms folded, and gazing moodily upon the beautiful woman before him. "Not so. My will that we should meet on this spot—yes; thine that we should part, if part we do."

Lutchina moved her head uneasily.

"I ask you to go," she said in a low tone.

"It is easy to ask!" laughed Melchior bitterly.

"Melchior, I hold thy promise."

"Aye. In a weak moment I passed my word that I would go on a journey; but why must I be banished from my father's house—why set adrift again when I have found my haven of rest? Heaven help me, Lutchina, but I took thee for

something different to other women—though why I should I know not, since thou art the same! One who will take the heart out of a man's breast only when tired of it to fling it into the dust."

"That is cruelly put," murmured the Baroness faintly.

"Thou art cruel to me," responded the Count. He took a step forward and fixed his ardent gaze on the pale woman. "Lutchina," he asked, "what is it that is come between us? Whence arises this sudden determination on thy part to urge my departure?"

Lutchina paused before she replied.

"It is not sudden," she said; "you know that I prayed you to leave me for awhile to myself that very day, the Countess Elizabeth quitted the Schloss."

"Aye. I believe she frightened thee, little one!" Melchior's accents were again soft and caressing. "She has the tongue of a hundred parrots and the eye of a hawk, that respectable Frau. I told thee she would talk. But why need she stand between us?"

"She does not. She did not even frighten me that day—but she set me thinking," answered Lutchina slowly.

"Women have no business to think," returned the Count with some impatience; "they but tangle themselves in a net of their own weaving. Yet since the Frau Elizabeth stands not between us, who does, Lutchina? For something surely does," continued Melchior resolutely as the Baroness remained silent. "Thou hast been cold to me of late, Lutchina. Subtle though the change has been, I have felt it. Little one," he added presently, for the Baroness still maintained her strange silence, "dost thou not know that the Wolfturms have in them somewhat of the nature of their name? They keep what they hold. Lutchina, thou art mine."

The Baroness raised her eyes from the running waters whose deeps she seemed to have been searching. They were dull with unshed tears, but a light came into them as she looked into the Count's dark beautiful face. And Melchior nodded and smiled upon her. "But yes!" he said, almost as though her lips had opened to frame the word "no."

At that moment the mill-wheel gave a long piercing wail and ceased working, and in the silence, now grown deathlike, the two stood and looked each other in the eyes. All the masterfulness of the man seemed concentrated in those of Melchior, and Lutchina stirred uneasily under his gaze, like one doing battle with a stronger will.

"Go, go! Leave me!" she cried a little wildly, as she clung a moment to the bridge.

"I will keep my promise—I leave thee this night, Lutchina," returned the Count, still with his eyes on hers. "Once more, with few words and scant warning, I quit my father's roof a wanderer. But it is at thy bidding, and I do not repine, for I take thy soul with me."

"Be silent! Go, go!" murmured the trembling woman once more. She thrust out her hand as if to repel him, but Melchior seized and held it forcibly within his own; and then all suddenly, as if overpowered by the witchery of the beautiful white face turned appealingly on him, he poured forth a torrent of burning words—such words as seethe the ears that hearken, and blacken the white soul that yields to them.

And at that moment as he stood there, the glare of the sunset sky on his impassioned face, pleading with Lutchina, through a rift in the pines between which Melchior had passed the night he first saw her—the Baron looked upon the two.

Unknown to Lutchina, the Baron had heard the rustle of her dress as she paused by the door of the picture room. His dead wife smiled upon him, but he was not thinking of her when suddenly he muttered, "I could forgive all if she would but speak." What led him out afterwards he could not tell, except that the air within the Schloss seemed red-hot, and a vexed heart is a restless one. So the Baron paced gravely out of his great gates and walked down the road, and then, because the dust lay thick or he was still dreaming, he rambled unconsciously into the wood that bordered it. He did not even know where he stood, till the laugh of a jay struck his ear, and the rustle of a woman's gown over the dried fern. Then he raised his bent head and saw Grutli. She looked at him a moment and laughed again.

"You seek your wife, Herr," she said. And a little cloud seemed to gather over the old man's brain, so that he had to think and could make no answer.

"Yes," continued the girl with her evil laugh, "the Herr Baron seeks his wife; I know it very well. Come with me and I will show her to him."

The Baron could not open his lips.

"Come," said Grutli, "she is close by."

She laid her hand on his arm, for he stood staring upon her with a bewildered expression, and led him along like a child to where some trees had been felled. "There," said she, "they make a pretty picture—look Herr Baron!"

And the Baron raised his heavy lids and looked straight down upon the bridge where Melchior pleaded with Lutchina.

Grutli's bosom heaved, fire flashed from her eyes.

"They make a pretty picture!" she said again, and with a wild laugh fled from the spot.

Melchior and the Baroness saw nothing that went on around them—heard neither Grutli's triumphant tones, nor the old Baron's heavy tread, when, having gathered in the scene before him, he turned and stumbled back amongst the trees—for Melchior was lost in his passion, and Lutchina, like a bird that is caught in the fowler's snare, seemed too stricken for the moment to struggle.

"Thou wert mine first—thou shalt be mine last," Melchior was urging. He held her hand still in his and pressed it against his heart. "I cannot give thee up—I cannot wait, little one," he said. "Come, come with me now to the land where the sun shines always, where I have riches and true friends, where our love shall reign supreme."

Then they were recalled to themselves. Unseen and unheard by either, Matthias had left the mill. His day's work was done, and he stole out to the little bridge over the stream where, if anywhere, there would be a current of cooler air. It was only when he came on a level with the thicket that sheltered the pair that he saw them, only then that he heard the Count's last words of pleading.

"Devil!" cried the miller in loud and terrible

tones. His strong hands were clenched; he was but a pace behind Melchior when the Count turned and struck him a blow that felled him to the ground. The miller lay like one dead, the white flints on which his head rested grew slowly crimson, and Lutchina started towards him with blanched lips.

"Leave him to me—it is nothing. Go home—go home!" said the Count. He seized her for the last time by the hands and looked into her agonized eyes. "Lutchina," he cried, "this meddling fool has made not marred our fate. Meet me to-night at the brink of the Blue Lake when the moon rises above the firs and all shall go well."

Lutchina said nothing. She glanced round at the old brown mill and the rippling stream, at the lurid skies and the creeping stain under Matthias' head, but she never looked once at Melchior before she moved away.

Yet as bidden she went home—home with so slow, so lagging a step, the hot night wind had begun to blow and a few stars to creep out before she reached it. The Baron did not appear. They told her he had already taken his evening repast and was closeted within his study; on no account was he to be disturbed, the Frau Baronnin was to excuse him that night.

Lutchina, sick and faint with weariness, said nothing, but a little later she went to his closed door and stood there with her throbbing temples pressed against it. She did not seek for admittance, the Baron did not want her—best perhaps that he should never want her again. So she stood there white and silent, hardly breathing, thinking not of the shame and misery of the past few hours, but only of the kind old man who from first to last had been good to her.

A sudden roar of thunder broke the Baroness's vigil. The sound came with such force and resonance it seemed to have burst straight from overhead—the very walls of the Schloss shuddered. Then all grew quiet again, only the wind hissed as before. Lutchina looked across to a window; there were no stars in the sky now—all was black outside. Would the moon rise at all on such a night? She kissed the panel of her husband's door and moved restlessly into the hall—there the lamplight fell full on her white dress and a little cry rose to her lips. Her dress was splashed with blood drops—the blood of good Matthias. She had never seen it till now.

"If he dies, it is I that have killed him!" she thought. If he dies? Ah, what if he were dead already! The ashen face, the crimsoning stones, the Count's heartless words rose again before her. Did she not know that Melchior could be cruel? What if Matthias were dead already! The terrible thought overmastered Lutchina. Quickly, as in the old days of her peasanthood, she had wrapped a cloak about her and was speeding away through the darkness to learn the worst. Her limbs trembled under her, more than once she stumbled as she fought her way recklessly through the black woods, where the trees swayed in the wind growing every moment more furious. But on this night she could have won her way blindfold to the old mill, for love and terror guided as well as hastened her steps. On the bridge she paused and, sick with fear, felt about with her hands for a recumbent form. But there was

nothing. She bent a moment over the waters and felt her face grow wet with drops torn off by the wind, and then shuddered and ran on, for the Lutchina gleamed curiously between its walls of rock, and, as if impelled by some hidden power, flowed with a new and mysterious swiftness. Even when she reached the mill door the sound of the turbulent waters drowned that of everything else. She pushed the door open and entered. There was no light other than that of a dim fire, still it was enough to show her him she sought—Matthias. The miller lay on the floor much as he had lain on the ground outside, his wound was not even bound up, and his eyes were closed. It was nothing, the blow, as the Count had said; but the miller had fallen heavily and for a time been stunned. When he came to himself the bridge was deserted, and he had crawled back to his lonely hearth and remained there, bowed together with grief. The words that Count Melchior had spoken to Lutchina rang in his ears—pain would not deaden them. He said to himself, in his righteous indignation, "Unless she had willed it he had not dared thus to speak to her." For hours he brooded on the shame of his master's daughter, and Melchior's relentless passion, and then, overcome by loss of blood and weariness, had sunk on the floor, so soon as the wild tumult of the furious river made itself heard and he had risen to see to the safety of things outside.

Lutchina knelt beside the friend of her youth and laid his head in her lap. She bound up the deep cut the flints had given him, fetched water and bathed his brow. She thought of all he had done for her, this man, in the old days, to make her life happy, in the new to make it holy—and she? Ah, might he not curse her now, were he to wake suddenly and see in whose arms he lay? So! good, patient Matthias. Lutchina stooped and laid her lips to the miller's brow. "God bless thee and forgive me!" murmured the Baroness, her tears dropping fast on the man's unconscious face. Then she rose and went out once more into the darkness.

(To be continued.)

ONLY.

BY HARRIET KENDALL.

ONLY a few words faltered in the sundown's mellow light,
While the radiant roses wondered at the blush of shy delight.
Only a little trembling, and a passionate caress,
And the world a little larger in a moment's happiness.

* * * * *
Only the sable shadow of distrustfulness and pride,
And a little rush of pain—and then a little grief to hide.

Only a little yearning when the roses look so fair,
And a little weary waiting—and a tear-drop here and there.

* * * * *
Only a little silence at the closing of the day,
And a little sorrow lifted, by the angels far away.

THE MYSTERY OF COMPTON PLACE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

BY LAURA VALENTINE,

Author of "A Puzzle for the Police," "The Knight's Ransom," &c. &c.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE APENNINES.

A YEAR had passed, and Gladys and Edmund, who had spent it in travelling, came to us on a visit. My sister was more beautiful than ever, and the love between them was evidently unchanged and undiminished.

Gladys and I found opportunity for many *tête-à-tête* chats.

"There is only one thing," she said one day, "about which Edmund and I have ever differed. I wanted him to return to his English home, and let my baby be born at the Croft; but he will not consent to go to England. He says he hates it; and more especially he dislikes the stately and formal magnificence of the Croft. He wishes to take you, Mabel, and myself, for our *villettiatura* to a château he bought before his mother's death, in the Apennines, a regular *Castello*. He says that the air there is life-giving, and the scenery wonderfully beautiful. Mabel, would you like to go?"

Would I like to be with Gladys? Of course I should! Mrs. Lee objected at first to the plan, but Edmund was very firm when once he had taken up an idea, and it ended in my sister, myself, and my stepmother's nurse—a clever, trustworthy woman named Brown—starting, as soon as the heat came, for the mountains.

I had never seen anything like the beauty of the scenery through which we journeyed, up the mountain-paths and roads; and when at last we saw the Castello di San Benito perched on a lofty crag of the great hills, we both uttered a cry of admiration. The country house of my brother-in-law proved to be a veritable castle, built probably in the Middle Ages, and Gladys declared that she recognised it as "Udolpho" itself, with the mysteries of which she had made acquaintance at the Dower House.

We found a whole establishment of servants, and charming rooms prepared for us in the newly renovated portion of the castle. It was from a boudoir which was a very bower of beauty, and through plate-glass windows, that we gazed out upon a landscape of wild beauty that might have delighted Salvator Rosa.

Edmund did everything he could to make our visit to this place pleasant. We took long rides and walks; there were neighbours—Italians, of course—who visited us, and proved delightful acquaintances. They were all musical people, and were lost in wonder at Gladys's voice, which they thought equal to an Italian one. Edmund also sang well, and with rides, and scrambles, and concerts, books sent on to us weekly from the nearest station, and (for me) the delight of sketching the loveliness around us, the days stole on only too rapidly.

At length we were invited to a friend's château

about three miles distant across the mountains, to meet a celebrated Italian statesman, and several literary people who were on a visit there; but, unluckily, the very morning when we were to start, Gladys became so poorly from a neglected cold and sore throat, with some slight touch of fever, that she was unable to go. Edmund, of course, wished to send a servant with excuses for us all, but Gladys would not hear of it.

"You must go," she said, "and take Mabel with you. She will very much enjoy the people you will meet to-day, and really I am not ill; it is only a feverish cold I have. Besides, you will find Dr. Zilliani there, of whom papa thinks so highly, and perhaps he will return with you for the night."

We were both very reluctant to leave her, but Gladys insisted, and we went.

It was a delightful *villettiatura* party in the open air; reminding one of a scene of Watteau's, as one gazed on the groups assembled on the sloping lawn. The château was full of guests; amongst them were men distinguished in literature, and the conversation at the refection around which we all gathered by-and-by, was delightful.

Luncheon was scarcely over, however, when our host was called aside by a servant, and in a few moments advanced with a troubled countenance to the spot where Edmund and I were standing together, talking to the statesman.

"I am sorry to tell you, Signor Lovel," he said, "that a man has arrived from San Benito with unpleasant news. Mrs. Lovel is very ill."

Edmund uttered a cry of alarm, and threw up his hands with a gesture of dismay; he had much of his Italian mother in him.

"We must go to her at once," I said, pale and anxious.

"Of course; I anticipated that you would; I have ordered your carriage, and I have no doubt that Dr. Zilliani will accompany you," said our host.

The physician at once assented to the request which Edmund repeated, and in as short a time as possible we drove off for home; Edmund in a passion of grief and anxiety, to which he gave almost frantic utterance.

Never can I forget the anxious misery of that drive; it seemed endless! I sprang from the carriage the moment we reached the castle, and flew to Gladys's room, followed by the doctor and Edmund. But Dr. Zilliani scarcely allowed me to remain a moment in her chamber. The house-keeper Benedicta, Mrs. Brown our mother's nurse, and the French lady's-maid, were already there. Gladys looked as if she were dying, but I was taken from her authoritatively; and Edmund and I had to wait in agonising suspense for two hours. Then Benedicta appeared weeping.

"*L'Eccellenza sua* was still very ill," she said, "and the bambino was dead. She was more grieved than she could say!" And we felt her words were sincere—every one loved Gladys—every one had hoped for the arrival of the "bambino."

Edmund turned away in speechless agony.

"It is my fault," he said, "I should have taken her to England."

By-and-by—an hour or more afterwards—Dr. Zilliani appeared. He pressed Edmund's hand.

"I am sorry for the loss of your little son," he

said, "but I am glad to say that I have hopes of the mother's survival. She is better."

Edmund sobbed out a thanksgiving.

"She has been in great danger," went on the good doctor. "And it has been caused (the servants think) by a woman called Teresa."

Edmund started and looked horror-struck, and the doctor went on—

"Benedicta has told me all about it. It seems that the Englishwoman and the *femme de chambre* were working in a small room near the Signora's boudoir, when they were startled by loud screams from the latter. They hastened at once to their lady, and in the corridor met the old woman Teresa. Brown says her appearance is so hideous that it is enough to frighten any one. On reaching the boudoir, they found Mrs. Lovel crouching by the sofa, white and wild with fear; they managed to take her to her chamber. Benedicta thinks—with the superstition of her country—that the old woman cast the evil eye on her lady."

Edmund muttered something like a malediction.

"How extraordinary!" I said. "I believe Gladys has once before been frightened by a hideous old woman; but we could never get her to tell how or why. Who is the woman, Edmund?"

Lovel had now sunk into a chair and buried his head in his arms folded on the table. He raised a white, haggard face at my question.

"She is a fiend; the curse of my life!" he said hoarsely.

The doctor and I glanced at each other amazed.

"Why do you keep her here then?" demanded the Italian suspiciously.

"She was my mother's nurse and mine," was the reply, "she saved my mother's life, when a child, in a fire, but was so badly burnt herself that she is frightfully disfigured. I always give her a home in recompence of that deed; but I had positively forbidden her going near my wife."

"She has nearly killed her," said the doctor drily, "perhaps from mere stupidity, or curiosity; but from words Mrs. Lovel uttered, in her temporary delirium, I believe she did more than show her ugly face to your wife."

"I will know at once what she said or did," exclaimed Edmund, springing up from his chair; "if Gladys had died I would have killed her."

I shuddered at the vindictive words.

"Will my sister recover now, Dr. Zilliani?" I asked, when we were alone.

"I trust she will, my dear young lady," he said, "but I will not leave her yet. I shall stay here, probably, for a day or two."

"And when may I see her?" I asked.

"Perhaps to-morrow; then you shall sit with her, if she is well enough, while I sleep. To-night I shall keep a vigil myself."

I thanked him warmly, and he returned to his patient's room soon afterwards.

I did not see Edmund for another hour or more. Then he looked worn out and exhausted.

"Teresa is to go at daybreak," he said; "I can't let her remain in the house with Gladys, towards whom she has taken an insane dislike. My poor darling must have offended her by showing fear of her; but she will not tell me what passed between them."

"We shall learn from Gladys herself, I trust, by-and-by," I said.

He sighed deeply.

"God grant it!" he ejaculated mournfully. He had evidently very little hope himself of saving her.

I did my best to console him; but, I saw, with very little effect. He could not forgive himself for having refused Gladys's request that he would take her to England.

CHAPTER V.

A CRY FOR HELP.

The next day Gladys was better, and in the afternoon Dr. Zilliani let me take his place, while he and Brown went to get a little sleep.

My darling lay looking so white and fragile that my heart sank as I gazed on her. She smiled feebly, and I bent down and kissed her, scarcely able to repress my tears. Dr. Zilliani had told her not to talk to me, but she said a few wistful words:

"You know that baby is dead?"

"Yes, darling," I answered, with another kiss.

"God knows best," she murmured, and closed her eyes.

From that time I never heard her again allude to the loss of her child, to my great surprise, for she had ardently wished for a son. I sat silent and motionless by her, feeding her occasionally as I had been ordered, but she did not attempt to say anything more.

In the course of the day I managed to get a few words with the housekeeper, who was a very superior woman for her class; I questioned her about Teresa.

"Teresa? Signorina," she said. "Yes, she is most hideous; she looks as if she were perpetually grinning like a man I once read about in a French novel. Of course we know she was disfigured through her self-devotion to her nursing, but we have never been able to bear her here. The people say that she is a witch, and has the evil eye. I only know that she is a miser, and loves gold above all things, and that she uses fearful language sometimes—and, in truth, I should not wonder if she had the evil eye, for all who offend her suffer afterwards in some way or the other."

"She is gone by this time, I suppose?"

"Oh, si—yes, Signorina, the padrone sent her away soon after day-dawn, as she deserved. I knew that she was angry because Signor Lovel forbade her showing herself to his lady—very properly, of course—but I never thought she would have ventured to disobey him or I would have watched her."

"What did she say to my sister, do you know?" I asked.

"No, Signorina, I do not know; perhaps the sight of her sufficed to alarm la padrona. We are all thankful that la Teresa is gone."

I wished I had seen the woman; her description answered so well to the face I had seen in the garden of Compton Place that I half thought she must have been my scarecrow of five years ago, and yet, how could she have got here?

I did my best to nurse Gladys into health, and at last, after many weary weeks, she rose from her couch of sickness—but no longer the same happy girl. In her golden hair were silver lines;

every vestige of colour had left her face, and the bright, sweet smile of old never returned to her lips. She had many long interviews alone with Edmund, and at last I ventured to ask him if he had yet learned from her what old Teresa had done to frighten her. He answered that he had, but that Gladys had begged him not to tell any one what the old woman had said; moreover, that she entreated me not to mention the subject to her at all—a second mystery! Worse this time than that of Compton Place!

We left our mountain abode as soon as Gladys could travel, and took our way to the Riviera, to which our parents had just returned from an excursion, made to avoid the heat.

Gladys remained with us only a few days. Edmund was going to take her at once to England, and our parents did not urge her stay with us, as they hoped her native air, and an English physician's skill might restore her health sooner; for she was still fearfully delicate. Edmund seemed as if he could not do enough to show her how grieved he was at having refused her former request; his love appeared to have grown humble, almost reverent, since her illness.

They left us—for years! They never returned to us; they never invited us to their English home. Gladys wrote only at rare intervals, and her letters were short and uninteresting. She told us that they had turned the stately old Croft into an asylum for idiots! (yet Gladys had always shrunk from such afflicted creatures), and had divided the estate into small holdings, on which they had established labourers as tenants; "thinking," my sister wrote, "that human beings were more interesting than deer."

My father was angry at these proceedings. He said with their fortune they might have founded an idiot asylum without putting themselves at its head, as they had done; and that the small holdings were an utter mistake and would ruin the land.

After that we heard very seldom from Gladys, though once she wrote to tell me that Edmund had given the living of the Croft property to John Clifford, and that they found him a valuable friend. And then, after a silence of years, I received the following letter from my old friend the former curate of Woodlands—

"DEAR MISS LEE,—

"It is sometime since I had the pleasure of hearing from you, but as I am once more living near your sister, I venture to resume my correspondence with you for her sake. I think she needs your presence and sympathy. Will you not come to her?

"You are, of course, aware that Mr. Lovel has changed the Croft into an asylum for idiot boys—that he has cut the park into small holdings, on which he has built houses for the labourers, to whom he has let the land. He has also restored the church (which is now mine) at a great expense, and insists on my having two curates, whose stipends he also pays. In fact, he and Mrs. Lovel are living the lives of ascetics and saints; but she looks very ill, and she has on her sweet face an expression of patient sorrow that touches me deeply. I asked her about you, and she replied, 'Mabel is quite well, thank you, but I have not seen her for several years.' 'Why?' I asked, perhaps too eagerly. 'She would not like to stay

with me here,' she said, 'it would be too trying amongst all these poor creatures.' 'But surely, then, it must be too trying for yourself! Why not depute the care of the boys to others?' She shook her head and was silent. Miss Lee, I think, if you would offer to go to her, she would be glad. I should scarcely have recognized Mrs. Lovel if I had met her unexpectedly, she is so much changed. She dresses as a Sister of Mercy, and I hear that she and Mr. Lovel live in two or three barely furnished rooms at the Croft, and devote themselves entirely to the idiots. Will you not come to poor little Gladys?"

I did not hesitate for a moment. I wrote to Gladys and asked her to let me go and see her. (Our father had been greatly vexed with her, but he was glad that I should go and learn what all this "fanaticism," as he called it, meant). I told Gladys that I should not at all dislike to share any duties she thought were required from her, and that she would make me very unhappy if she refused to let me go to her.

The answer came by return of post.

"Come, by all means, my own dearest Mabel. I have not asked you to visit us, because the visit must needs be a painful one. Our poor protégés are so sadly trying, and some are so repulsive! But, if you can bear it, come."

And I went.

(To be continued.)

SOOFEE SONG.

L.
CUP and cup-bearer should ready stand—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!
For the drunken world is fairy-land—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!
In the spring the madman breaks his chains;
Hark! the lunatics laugh in crazy strains—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!

II.
Eyes that have never shed a tear—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!
May be seen, like flowing rivers, here—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!
If vintner and minstrel were only nigh,
I'd rouse the house with a frantic cry—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!

III.
Ah, fair one! the story of Bédar again,
Is played by the poor young man just slain:
Were such tyrants many, life would be vain—
Ah, ha, ha, HA! Ah, ha, ha, HA!

This strange, mystical song was written in Hindostane by Meer Mohamed Alee, whose poetical or artistic name was Bédar, or the Awakened One. He was still living at Agra a year or two before Lord Lake arrived there.

PAUL BENISON.

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31. How Alice Saved Her Village. W. Sime.
32. Grace Escott's Good Fight. Alice King.
33. At the Well. Maude Jeanne Franco.
34. The Measure of His Sin. Rev. J. B. Owen.
35. She Would be a Lady. E. J. Lysaght.
36. Miss Burton's Prejudice. F. A. Groom.
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39. Tolling, Rejoicing, Sorrowing. H. Major.
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VOL. III. No. 33.]

LONDON : AUGUST 15, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

SMART'S MILL.

BY LOUISA BIGG.

Author of "Clare Welsman."

CHAPTER I.

THE MILL.

IT was January, the day was dull and cloudy, and there was a melancholy breeze sighing through the bare, black branches of the elms. The stream which flowed through the town, and ran past the flour mill outside the boundaries, was dark under the dark sky, and looked sullen and unhappy. Once that stream had turned the mill, and the miller had carried his own sacks to the waggons at busy times, and had kept his accounts himself, in a very rudimentary manner, but now all that has changed. The old miller is lying in the churchyard with a moss-grown stone at his head, and a grassy mound above him, and his old home is transformed almost beyond recognition. The house has been rebuilt, and there is a costly drawing-room in it, and a range of stables close at hand for the new miller's hunters, and a modern flower-garden at the side farthest from the mill, and the mill itself is a tall building of three times the size of the old one, and is fitted up with the newest machinery, which grinds on night and day with a clangour and vibration that shakes the solid pile from end to end.

The new miller devotes part of each day to the mill, and the rest to his own pleasure, and that of his wife, who is a gay Manchester lady with money and pretensions. They both hunt in the season, and ride and drive a great deal in the summer, and spend a month at the seaside every autumn, and manage to get a large amount of amusement out of their lives.

The business goes on very well under Mr. Smithers, the manager, a clever and energetic man, and the accounts are kept in order by a

competent clerk, and after opening his letters in the morning, consulting with these functionaries, and issuing general orders, the mill-owner, Mr. Smart, feels that his day's duty is at an end, and that he is at liberty to put on his well-cut coat, and roam at large.

At the time of which I am writing the managing clerk was Lester Ford, and on that January morning he sat in the neat little office which Mr. Smart had built adjoining the mill, and turned over leaf after leaf of a heavy ledger, making entries from time to time, with an absorbed expression on his face.

Lester Ford was a man of about thirty-five, or perhaps he might be older than that, for already his dark hair was streaked with grey. His eyes were bright and fine both in form and colour, and his complexion was of a pale brown, and when he spoke his serious face lit up very pleasantly.

When he had finished with his big ledgers, and filed a heap of papers, he turned towards the window, leaning his head on his hand, and looking out at the colourless sky and the leafless branches traced against it. That smartly painted and varnished office, with its desks and safes and rows of ledgers upon neat shelves, and uncompromising, business-like air, did not seem the place for sentimental musings, and yet there was a touch of something very like sentiment in the clerk's face, as he sat there gazing out of the office window. He was wondering, in a vague, half conscious way, whether this was all—the day's mechanical work, the lodging up two pairs of stairs, with uncertain comforts, the isolation and the poverty. But he thought of himself listlessly, as if he were someone else looking on at a dull show, with indifferent interest as to its progress or its end.

He was roused from his reverie by the sound of carriage wheels, and the sight of a pony phæton which drove rapidly past the window, and stopped at the house door. With a sigh, he took out paper and envelopes, and began to write a letter to a certain baker, with whom Mr. Smart's manager in the mill had had some unsatisfactory dealings and whom it was necessary to bring to a sense of

his errors. He was just finishing the note, when he was aware of a tap at the door, and on rising to open it, he found Mrs. Smart without. She was dressed in a satin "costume," though it was only twelve o'clock in the day, and wore a Regent Street hat which she had lately imported, and a sable tippet.

"Oh, Mr. Ford," she cried, "I wish you would come and show Miss Crossfield over the mill; she has taken a fancy to see the machinery and things, and I know nothing about it, and detest getting floury, too. Mr. Smithers is out, and so is Mr. Smart, and I don't know whom to ask; are you very busy?"

"No," answered Ford, smiling pleasantly, "we are rather slack this morning, and I can easily get away. I suppose Miss Crossfield knows what a dusty process going over the mill is?"

"I will lend her a light cloak, and put a veil round her hair; please meet us at the mill door in five minutes."

And Mrs. Smart ran back to the house greatly relieved at having made so satisfactory an arrangement, for Miss Crossfield was a lady of whom she stood in considerable awe, and besides the floury dust would have damaged her toilette wofully.

Marion Crossfield was a kind of social queen in the town of Barton, and was on visiting terms with very few of its inhabitants, though every one knew her by sight and by repute, and Mrs. Smart was not one of her chosen friends. She lived in the large square house with plate glass windows, on the Green, in the centre of Barton, and was the idol of her father, now a man of seventy, with failing health and eyesight. It was on his account that she had come to the mill to-day, for he had taken a fancy to a special kind of flour, and she had driven down to inquire for it.

"I am afraid I am giving everybody a great deal of trouble," she said, as Mrs. Smart led her to the mill door, muffled in veil and dust cloak, and she saw Ford waiting for her; "it is so kind of you to let me see the mill."

"It is quite an honour for us, Miss Crossfield; scarcely any one cares to see over it, and I don't think we have ever had a lady come; they are afraid of the dust and the ladders," said Mrs. Smart.

"I did not know that I was an exception," said Miss Crossfield, laughing. "I always like to see how things are done."

"Bring Miss Crossfield back to the house when you have shown her everything," said Mrs. Smart to Ford, and then she left the two to their tour of inspection.

As Marion had said, she liked to see how things were done, and she entered into the details of the machinery with an interest and intelligence that filled her guide with astonishment. He had never spoken to her or heard her speak before, and had thought of her as a rather haughty fine lady—as far as he thought of her at all. He was totally unprepared for the frank sweetness of her voice, and the gentle, courteous manner that her intimates knew so well. There was an innocent directness in all she said and did that put the shy, reserved man at his ease, and when they had looked into fragrant bins full of the creamy flour, and mounted steep stairs, and penetrated

into the engine-house, and inspected the great wheels and pistons, and looked down into the green depths at the mill-head together, Ford was possessed by an odd feeling that he had known Miss Crossfield all his life, and that it was a very long time since they entered the mill together, instead of being only half an hour ago.

"Thank you for explaining it all so well," she said, as he was leaving her at the house door. "I have enjoyed it very much, and I understand just how the works go on."

And she held out her little bare hand with a brilliant on the middle finger.

In a few minutes more the light carriage drove rapidly away, and Ford spent the rest of the day doggedly labouring at the accustomed rows of figures, and expanding into letters the curt memoranda left him by his employer.

CHAPTER II.

THE HANDKERCHIEF.

THE next morning, as Ford was settling down to his work, a floury figure appeared at the door of the office, holding in his hand something which seemed to afford him considerable embarrassment.

"Here's a thing as I picked up just agen the big sack-cart," said he, holding out a white handkerchief as if he were afraid it might come to pieces in his fingers; "would it be that lady's as come yesterday making such a experiment all over the place? I thought you'd better take care on it."

It was Ben, the "top-boy," who spoke, and he laid the article on Ford's desk, with a sigh of relief, and, without more ado, went back to his business in the mill.

Ford lifted the delicate piece of cambric and examined it; then, with a cynical expression playing round his lips, he took out his own handkerchief of cheap linen and laid it beside the other. It was Miss Crossfield's without a doubt; there was an elaborate monogram worked in the corner, and lace round the border, and it was faintly perfumed.

"The sooner it goes back the better," he said to himself. "I will leave it on my way home this evening." And impatiently thrusting his own handkerchief into his pocket, he wrapped the other in paper and put it in his desk.

It was dusk that afternoon when there was a trampling of horses' feet without, that announced the return of Mr. and Mrs. Smart from a long day's hunting. There was a sound of cheerful voices as they dismounted on the green strip in front of the house, and Juno, the pointer, came lumbering out of the yard to meet them, wagging her fat tail and barking a merry welcome. Mrs. Smart's voice was audible above the din, as she gave Blockley, her groom, directions about her horse, and made remarks to her husband about the splendid run, and communicated to Blockley where and when they had found, and how one fox had led them into Dyson's Spinney, and other details of absorbing interest to her and her auditor.

Then Blockley led the mud-splashed horses

round to the stables, the house-door slammed, and the only sound to be heard was the cawing of the rooks in their tree-top home on the other side of the meadow.

Presently Mr. Smart, still in his boots and white cords, came into the office with a bundle of letters which had arrived by the afternoon post, and began giving Ford directions about the answers to them, and it was seven o'clock before the clerk had finished his day's work, and he had forgotten all about the parcel in his desk till he was half-way home. Home? well, it was the only one which Ford had, and he was not discontented with it, though there were holes in the sitting-room carpet, and the chairs were hard and ugly, and the tiny bed-room was damp and draughty. He had not been brought up as a gentleman's son, and these things came naturally to him.

"How late you are, Mr. Ford," remarked his landlady, rather sharply, as he hung up his hat in the passage. "I am blessed if I wasn't afraid you had fallen into the river, and the fire's a'most out in your grate; I lit it a hour and a half ago, thinking you'd be in every minute."

So the tired man's first employment, on his return to the domestic hearth, was to coax the dull embers into a blaze before he could rest by his fire-side in peace, and drink his solitary cup of tea.

Several likenesses hung over the mantel-piece, and generally they were Ford's only company, for he had been in Barton little more than a year, and had made but few acquaintances. There was his father, the old Cumberland farmer, dead two years ago; and his mother, to whom a third of Ford's scanty income went, and who lived with a married daughter up among the hills in her native county; and there was the daughter herself, curiously unlike Ford, with her round, cheerful face, and stout figure. As his eyes rested on them all this evening, his thoughts travelled back into the past, and he wondered at the swiftness of the prosaic, monotonous years that had glided by since he had left his childhood's home. For more than twenty of them he had been living much the life he led now, only that his pleasures had grown fewer, and he older and duller. A fastidiousness, out of place in his condition, and a distaste for the women of his own class, had kept him from marrying, as most of his old comrades had done, and now he had no intention of it.

He grew tired of fruitless retrospection, and took down from his shelf a book that was a favourite with him, opening the pages at random. This was what caught his sight:

Why your hair was auburn I shall divine,
And your lips of your own geranium's red,
And what you will do with me, in fine,
In the new life, come in the old life's stead.

And that night, as he lay on his bed, the words kept running through his dreams, and he thought Evelyn Hope was standing on the river bank in front of the mill, only she had Marion Crossfield's face, and he was giving her the laced handkerchief which he had forgotten to deliver the evening before.

The next morning broke clear and sunny, and when Ford reached the mill, the river was spark-

ling in the sunshine as it had not done that year. The great Muscovy ducks were basking on the promontory in front of the mill door, and in the adjoining meadow the lambs were carrying on ungainly gambols, and finding the world a pleasanter place than the few murky days of their existence had given them reason to suppose it. Early as it was in the year, for it was the last day of January, there was a suggestion of spring in the air, and the winter had been so mild that the crocuses were already beginning to burst their sheaths and show glimpses of the gold and purple within.

It was so fine that towards the middle of the day it tempted Marion Crossfield out of doors, and she resolved to walk down to the mill and inquire for her missing handkerchief. Happening to glance out of window in the course of an unusually intricate calculation, Ford saw her tripping across the meadows; she opened the little gate, and crossed the wooden bridge that spans the stream in one of its numerous windings, and taking the path to the mill, she came on straight and swiftly towards the great bridge over which the mill stretches, and knocked at the office door. Ford opened it, and she came in with a pretty hesitation.

"Did I leave a handkerchief behind, when I looked over the mill, the other day?" she asked. "I think I must have dropped it there or on the way home."

"One of our men picked it up," answered he, opening his desk and taking out the packet.

"Oh, thank you, how glad I am," she cried, as he handed it to her. "I care especially about it because my little niece worked it for me, and I would not have lost it on any account; I am sorry to have been so careless and troublesome."

"I ought to have brought it yesterday," answered Ford, "but we were very busy in the evening, and I forgot it."

"Oh, it has given me a pleasant walk this morning," she said, smiling. "What a pretty view you have from this window across the fields; but I daresay you have not much time to look at it," she added.

"It is not always like this," he answered; "there is so much mist round the river in the autumn and winter that it looks dismal enough."

"But it is a view I could fancy getting very fond of," she went on; "the willows are so pale and silvery, and I like the level stretch of meadows, and I have always had a sort of craze for water, and never get tired of looking at it."

"An Undine," he said involuntarily.

She gave a quick, surprised glance into his face, and then laughed merrily.

"Oh, no, I am a very substantial mortal. But I must not stay disturbing you any more; thank you for taking care of my handkerchief; Good-bye."

She went out, and again took her way across the wooden bridge, wondering to herself that Smart's clerk was acquainted with Undine.

"There is something about him that I like very much," she remarked to the stream and the reeds and sedges; "he does not seem just the same as everybody else, and yet I do not know what the difference is."

CHAPTER III.

THE SCHOOL.

It was more than a month before Miss Crossfield came that way again; but when the March winds were blowing she drove up to Mrs. Smart's door, one afternoon, and asked to see that lady. She was ushered into the drawing-room with its ormolu, and showy damask, and florid china, and took her seat in a gilt chair, to wait the arrival of her hostess, whose footsteps she could distinctly hear in the room overhead, as she made a hasty but gorgeous toilet for Marion's benefit.

The latter was beginning to grow impatient, for she was making a round of calls that afternoon, when Mrs. Smart at length appeared rustling in figured silk and profuse of smiles.

"The wind was so rough that I hardly knew whether I should get here," said Marion, following the usual custom of our nation by beginning the conversation with a remark on the weather.

"I am sure it was very good of you to come on such a day," said Mrs. Smart, before whose eyes hovered visions of being received into Miss Crossfield's exclusive inner circle.

"I do not know what you will say when I tell you that I am come begging," said Marion, in her clear, pleasant voice. "I am trying to set up a night-school for the lads who are too old to go to school, and have no time in the day, and I very much want a little help."

"I am sure Mr. Smart and I shall give you a trifle with pleasure; he always says that he never can refuse Miss Crossfield anything."

"It is a good thing then that I am moderate in my demands," said Marion, smiling. "I do not think I am at all a good beggar, generally."

"How much do you want? What are other people giving?" asked Mrs. Smart.

Marion handed her a short list of amounts, and said:

"To tell you the truth I have already nearly enough money, for we have the school-room free—the old infant school by the factory walk—but I very much want teachers: could you come once a week and help me?"

Mrs. Smart's face lengthened visibly.

"I should like to oblige you, Miss Crossfield, but I do not think Mr. Smart would let me go into that part of the town, and then it is so difficult getting backwards and forwards in the evening."

"Will you think it over?" said Marion; "I should be so glad of more teachers."

"Well, I will think of it," answered Mrs. Smart, handing her a guinea, and, after some desultory chat, Marion took her departure.

She went home a good deal dispirited with her afternoon's work. She had filled her list of subscriptions, it is true, and had enough money for the necessary expenses of the year, but the school was her favourite good work, and it went to her heart to turn away the heavy, untaught youths for lack of teachers. She had invited four different people to help her, and every one had a different excuse—one was afraid of infection; another was not strong enough; a third had too much to do already; and, lastly, there was Mrs. Smart's refusal. She had already forty youths under her teaching, and only stout Miss Creek, the grocer's

daughter, as an ally, and on the previous Tuesday twelve more had presented themselves, neatly dressed and new-washed for the occasion, and had requested to be admitted.

"I am afraid I cannot put your names down to-night," Marion had said with a pang, as she saw the blank disappointed faces before her.

"Couldn't ye take just us in, ma'am?" implored one big youth of sixteen.

"We wouldn't give you no more trouble nor we could help," said another suppliant. And Marion, against her judgment, had ended by putting down the names of the whole twelve, every one of whom she felt certain would appear on the following Tuesday, and add to her difficulties.

All that night she dreamt of her school, and, as she dressed the next morning, she sought in vain for some happy inspiration. There were certainly people whom she could ask to come and teach her scholars, but they were utterly unsuitable. There was Tom Fraser, for example; he would come if he were asked—but then he imagined himself in love with Marion and so was quite out of the question. There was Annie Lye, who dressed in the extreme of fashion, and was always taking up some new hobby; she would probably come—for about three weeks.

She went down to the breakfast-room with a burdened mind, and it needed all the cheering influences of hot coffee, a blazing fire, and the stand of fragrant flowers in the window, to restore her spirits to their usual level. Her father was not well enough to appear, and she had no one to whom she could communicate her troubles, and the vision of fifty-two youths and two teachers would not be dispelled. The arrival of the post was a welcome diversion to her thoughts, and she turned over the letters, which the servant laid on the table, with that sensation of gentle excitement which the unknown communicates to all of us.

Two letters for her father, and three for herself. The former she at once sent upstairs, and then opened one of her own; it proved to be an advertisement of some one's boots and shoes; the next was a begging letter from the secretary of an Orphan Asylum; the third was a note from Mrs. Smart, and ran as follows:—

"The Mill,
March —th, 19—.

"DEAR MISS CROSSFIELD,—

"Since seeing you, it has occurred to me that if you still want assistance in your school, our managing clerk, Mr. Ford, would be very useful to you. He is a steady and thoroughly respectable man, and if you like the idea, I will ask him to come and help you next Tuesday. As I anticipated, Mr. Smart will not hear of my teaching, though he thinks it very kind of you to have the school.

"Believe me, dear Miss Crossfield,
"Yours sincerely,
"ARABELLA SMART."

Miss Crossfield.

"What a splendid idea!" said Marion to herself, as she folded up the letter; "I will certainly write and accept her offer. I do hope that he will come; it would solve all my difficulties."

CHAPTER IV.

A PROMISE.

For the last month, Ford had been living in a painful dream. His outer life had gone on exactly as usual, but within there had been a strange revolution. Since his last meeting with Marion Crossfield he had thought much more of her than was good for him. He had struggled against the infatuation, for so he phrased it to himself; he despised his own folly; he forced himself to work till he was worn out in body and mind, and slept the sleep of exhaustion; but, in spite of all, her face haunted him pitilessly, and waking or sleeping, he could see her; now swathed in her nunlike wrappings, as she first appeared to him in the mill, now fair and graceful in her walking-dress, and little velvet hat, looking as she did when she stood beside his desk, and praised the view from his window.

"What a fool I am," he said to himself. "I wish to Heaven a hard frost would set in, and that it would snow; to be thoroughly uncomfortable might bring me to my senses."

But it was growing too late in the year for such an experiment, and the buds were swelling, and the earth was making preparation for natural gladness. And in the midst of all, one morning he found a note in the office from Mrs. Smart, making her proposition.

"I must not go," said Ford, as he read it. "I will write at once and tell her so."

Then he reflected that so hasty a reply would be uncourteous, and he resolved to give her an answer in the afternoon, when he returned from dinner. All the morning, in the intervals of his work, the thing troubled him. It would have been so pleasant to do something for Miss Crossfield, but his common sense told him that it was a temptation to be thrust aside if he valued his own peace of mind. Any pleasure connected with her would be a poisonous, delusive pleasure. As yet he was his own master, and he would remain so, and before he left the office he wrote a decided but polite refusal to Mrs. Smart's request, and put it in his pocket, to be delivered on his return.

There are times in the life of each of us when circumstances array themselves against us in overwhelming force, and it was so with Ford that day. Contrary to all custom, Miss Crossfield went down the High Street on some trifling errand at a quarter to two, and for the first time in his life, he met her as he went back to the mill. She was surprised to see him in High Street, as she did not know where he lived or what his hours were, and he was so connected with the mill in her mind, that it had not occurred to her to wonder where his leisure time was spent. He would have avoided her had there been time, but he had come quickly round the corner of Prince's Street, where he lodged, and it was too late. It may be that if she had found time for consideration, she would not have stopped to speak to him of the subject with which her thoughts were filled, as she did.

"Oh, Mr. Ford," she said eagerly, "has Mrs. Smart asked you about my school? She told me that she was going, and I should be so glad of your help."

"I am afraid that I cannot come," he answered; "my time is so much taken up."

"Cannot you, really?" she asked, with genuine disappointment in her tone. "I want help so much, and I do not know where to look for it."

"I am very sorry," he said, looking away from the sweet, troubled face, "but I am afraid I shall not be able."

"It is only once a week," she pleaded, "on Tuesday, and now we have more than fifty youths and men, and only Miss Creek and me, and sometimes her brother, to teach them. Perhaps I ought not to have begun the school without more promises of help, but the poor things are so anxious to learn, and it is so sad to see them."

Her voice thrilled every fibre in his nature as no other voice had ever done before, and he stood silent before her, with a dazed, helpless feeling that he could not struggle against fate.

"Will you consider it?" she went on, utterly unconscious of the cause of his hesitation, but seeing that he wavered. "I would not ask it on any account if it would be oppressive to you, but if you could find time to come sometimes, I should feel it such a favour, and the poor lads would be so glad."

"I will try to come next Tuesday," said he, in a sort of desperation, and raising his hat he passed quickly on without another word.

"If I die for it I can't refuse her," he said to himself as he hurried down High-street; "I must bear it as best I can."

And if his dark face looked sterner and more hollow than usual that day, there was no one to take any notice of it, either at home or abroad.

CHAPTER V.

IN LOVE.

Two months had passed, and the summer had begun, and every Tuesday night Ford had met Marion Crossfield, and had done drudgery for her sake, and had guarded her sometimes to her own door, and had gained her fullest confidence and regard.

"I never could have kept on the school without him," she told her father a hundred times; "he always does the right thing, and his boys get on twice as fast as mine, and he does not mind what trouble he takes."

And her father laughed, and amused himself by joking her about her infatuation for Smart's clerk, and told his nephew Vernon Bligh, who was staying with them, all about it.

"You must show me your paragon, Marie Stuart," said that young gentleman to his cousin.

"Not if you call me by that wicked woman's name," answered she.

"But you remind me of her in many ways," said Vernon. "I should fancy she had very much your manners."

"And pray do you fancy that I should poison one husband, and blow up another, and fall in love with dozens of people?"

"Oh, I take the lenient view of her Majesty's character, and I do not believe she did any of those things. But to return to your paragon: what is he like?"

"He is a quiet looking man of about forty, with black hair and a clever face, and thin, hollow

cheeks. Seriously, Vernon, you cannot think what a comfort he is to me, and the boys are very tiresome sometimes. I do not believe you would put up with them for one evening."

"Try me," said her cousin; "let me go with you next Tuesday, for I can see you do not half appreciate my good qualities."

* * * * *

It was the school night, and Ford was sitting at the long desk, setting copies in his neat, regular handwriting, with a cluster of youths round him. At the other side of the room a line of men were seated, painfully working their way through the mysteries of penmanship, and in the middle there was a party absorbed in the study of arithmetic. The windows were open, and a lilac tree that grew in the school enclosure, was waving its heavy, rich blossoms in the warm breeze, and several of the scholars had brought bunches of cottage garden flowers for Miss Crossfield, so that the room was quite fragrant. With a beating heart Ford was listening for her coming, for she was late to-night, and seven had struck ten minutes ago. There was a sound of voices and laughter; hasty footsteps on the gravel walk; and she and Vernon entered, she smiling at something he said as he held the door for her. He was carrying her books and her light shawl, and she was so occupied with him that she did not at once come up and speak to Ford, as was her usual custom. A sharp pang of miserable, unreasoning jealousy thrilled his frame, and left him cold and trembling, and he rose hastily from his place and went over to the other end of the schoolroom. He could see Marion and her companion smiling into each others' faces, and he noted the man's uncommon grace and beauty, and the familiar terms on which he seemed with Marion. How fitting and natural it would be if those two should love one another, and what right had he to complain of it? Had he not told himself a hundred times that something akin to this might come, and that he must stand prepared? He had never hoped himself—not for a moment—yet how he suffered at seeing hope cut off. Marion wondered all that evening at his coldness, and thought he was offended, or tired of the work, and over and over again, addressed him with a gentle courtesy that broke his heart. The time seemed never ending to Ford before they all passed out into the sweet spring evening with its lilac scents and glimmering stars, and he found himself once more in his shabby little sitting-room.

It was all over, then—and the bitterest thing of all was, that it had never been. If only he dared to pour out his passion to her once, and then get leave to die! He went to his desk, unlocked it, and took out a letter in his own handwriting and laid it on the table. There was no address to it, and there was no name at either the beginning or the end; he had written it a month or more ago, one stormy evening, to ease his secret anguish, and it ran thus:—

"It seems to me at times as if there were only you and I in the world, and all the rest were shadows. It is wonderful that I should have lived so long and not known you, and even now I know so little. I should like to learn how you live in the wide rooms behind those garden walls; what you read, and who your friends are, and how you fill the hours. Nothing on earth could compare

with that in interest, and yet you do not dream that I care. How would you look, I wonder, if I told you that I dared to love you? Would you be angry? I fancy you would turn pale, and that there would be the same disappointment and pity in your eyes that I saw there when they told you that Jem Hearn, your favourite scholar, had been caught poaching, and sent to prison. And of course after that you could have no more to do with me. Good God! to what end is this come upon me? I never sought it; I battled against it. I remember now that even on that first day I had to arm myself against your sweet eyes, and the vibrations of your voice, though I could not understand why, and never dreamed of loving you. If ever you should guess my secret, think me mad, and forgive——"

The letter broke off there, and he had put it away and not looked at it till now. It seemed to him now that he had been wrapt in a happy dream when he wrote those words, and he tore the sheet across and across and threw it on the fire.

Then he rose, and walked far out of the town, he knew not whither, coming back so exhausted that he slept all night in a kind of stupor, and awoke in the morning with a terrible headache.

He looked so wan and altered that Mrs. Smart noticed it as he passed the window of the dining-room, where she and her husband were sitting.

"What is the matter with Ford?" she inquired; "he looks out of sorts altogether."

"I am sure I don't know," said his employer, taking a second egg. "I have thought sometimes lately he seemed out of spirits; but he is always a quiet sort of fellow. Perhaps he wants his salary raised."

"I don't see myself what he can have to trouble him," said Mrs. Smart complacently; "a single man, with no cares and a sufficient income."

She was not an unkindly woman, but she looked upon Ford as a reliable and satisfactory machine, warranted not to get out of order. She could no more have understood the passion that lived and moved on the other side of her house-wall than could the great Muscovy drake on the window-sill, who was waiting to be fed with fragments from her table.

As the day went on the wretched certainty grew upon Ford that Marion Crossfield loved and was beloved, and he had never before sounded his own capacity for suffering. He did his work as usual, neatly and without mistakes, so strong was the habit of years, but he felt that he could not go on living thus any more than a man could live upon the rack. He was dazed and giddy as he walked towards the town, and sent his dinner away untouched.

In the evening he went home exhausted and desperate, and paced up and down his little room, unable to think or reason. All the life of the man's heart, suppressed and unrealized in youth, was concentrated on this fatal passion of his middle age.

He had plodded through the grey level years, content and uncomplaining, but now he had neared the walls of Paradise, and heard fragments of ineffable music, and inhaled the immortal fragrance of the flowers within, and he was a new man; wiser but exquisitely unhappy.

The night passed, heavy hour by hour, and the sun shone in upon his sleepless bed. He rose languidly and dressed, and made his way downstairs. The parlour was quite glorified by the sunshine; the plants in the windows were blooming freshly, and there was summer in the air. Was there enchantment too?

On the table lay a letter, the sight of which sent the blood to his heart, and dimmed his eyes. It was enclosed in a dainty scented envelope, with a gold monogram, and he knew the writing so well, that he could scarcely open it for the trembling of his hands.

This was what the letter said:—

“ Wednesday afternoon.

“ DEAR MR. FORD,

“ I think I ought to let you know at once that I shall not be able to come to our school next Tuesday, as, perhaps, you may be able to get some one for the one night to help you, if you know in time. Young Creek will go with his sister if he can, but he is uncertain. I am sorry to be absent, but my cousin, who was with me yesterday, is going to be married on that day, and I have promised to go to the wedding. It was only settled this afternoon, for I had feared whether I could leave my father. Thanking you once again for all your kind assistance,

“ I am, yours sincerely,
“ MARION CROSSFIELD.”

Ford, poor foolish dreamer, seemed all on a sudden to have stepped into heaven. He forgot for the moment that she was no nearer to him than before, and let himself revel in the unhoped-for relief from pain. He crossed the sunlit meadows, treading on air, and more than once on his way he took her letter out of his breast-pocket, and looked at it to assure himself that it was real, and not a delusion of his overwrought nerves and brain. In the revulsion of feeling that had come over him at the discovery of his mistake, he thought that he could be content if all only remained as it was—if he might have leave to see her, and hear her speak, and work for her; but he knew at the same time that his love for her had struck deeper root than ever in his being.

CHAPTER V.

“ I WILL COME TO YOU THERE !”

It was one evening in September, and the school-room was full of pupils, and Marion Crossfield and her helpers were very hard-worked. She was pleased and satisfied at the success of their efforts, and looked round the room with a gentle pride. It was very sweet to her to realize that she had been able to turn her kindly thought into action, and brighten those dull lives, and there was a glow within her which she had not known for years. Her life was a useful, and in some ways a brilliant one, for her word was law in Barton, and she was surrounded by the *éclat* that wealth confers; but under all was beating uneasily the woman's heart, which nothing except love, the crown of life, can fully satisfy.

“ I really think the school has been a success,”

she said, as the scholars disappeared, and she and Miss Creek and Ford collected stray pens and locked up cupboards.

“ There is no doubt of it,” said cheerful Miss Creek. “ Two of my men can read capitally, and all the class tolerably, and when they began they could not get through a line. The women are very pleased about it, and several have told me their boys stop at home and read and write instead of going to the Plough every night.”

“ The numbers keep up well,” said Ford; “ there were sixty here to-night. Is any one coming for you, Miss Crossfield ?”

“ No,” said Marion, “ I think not; will you take care of me, if you are going my way ?”

They all went out together, and Miss Creek bade the others good night at the end of the street where her father's shop stood. It was but five minutes' further walk to Mr. Crossfield's, and Ford and Marion said little on the way.

I have sometimes wondered whether, if that night he had forgotten his humility and the social gulf between them, and laid his love at her feet, she would have stooped to take it. Marion, with her large, dreamful eyes, and high intelligence, and tender soul, was no unlikely woman to scorn conventions and defy the world for love's sake. But would she have loved him? I am half-sorry that he was too unselfish and diffident to ask her, and yet had he been other than he was I should not have cared so much to trace his story.

Meanwhile a sobbing breeze blew round them as they walked and scattered autumn leaves about their path.

“ What a melancholy-looking night,” said Marion, as she stood on her doorstep. “ I dislike autumn, and it seems upon us already.”

“ Oh there will be more bright days yet,” said Ford, looking up at her, and taking the hand she held out to him.

“ Good-night,” said Marion, weighed down by a sadness that she could not account for.

“ Good-bye till next week,” said he, and the door shut between them.

Two days had gone by smoothly and monotonously, and on the evening of Thursday there was a large party given by Mr. Vickars, the banker, who lived in the yellow stone house near Mr. Crossfield's. Dr. Scott, the hard-worked Barton surgeon, who had come home tired about nine o'clock, was reluctantly preparing to follow his wife to the party, for the Vickarses were patients, and must not be offended. He had sat down in the dining-room for a few minutes' peace, and had read through an article in the *Lancet*, with his feet on the fender, and was now making his way upstairs to dress, heartily wishing that he might go to bed instead. But that night there was to be neither party nor bed for Dr. Scott. He had not reached the top of the stairs when there came a sharp pull at the surgery-bell, and in a few moments his assistant came into the hall below.

“ What is it, Jones ?” cried the doctor.

“ You are wanted at Smart's Mill, directly, sir; some one has fallen through a trap-door.”

“ I'll come at once—tell Tom to bring the brougham round again.” And in a quarter of an hour the doctor drew up on the green before the Smart's house.

Eager faces were watching for him at the mill and the office-door, but the house was all dark. A

miller came up to him as he stepped out of the carriage.

"This way, please, doctor, we've took him in the office.

"Who is it?" asked Dr. Scott, following the man, instruments in hand.

"It's Mr. Ford, our clerk; he's main bad and don't know nothing."

The doctor passed quickly in, and there, on the floor, in the middle of the little counting-house, Ford was lying on a mattress that a miller's wife had brought from her cottage hard by. He was, as the man had said, quite unconscious to all appearance, and yet from time to time he moaned as if in mortal pain. The doctor carefully examined him, looking graver and graver as he went on, and then paused and looked at his deathly face in silence.

"What ails him, sir?" asked good Mrs. Pridden, who had brought the mattress, and some brandy which she had been vainly trying to make the patient swallow. "It's a bad job, ain't it?"

"I am afraid it is," said Dr. Scott; "how did it happen?"

"Nobody rightly knows, sir, for when they found 'un he couldn't say nowt, but old Bill the top-boy he says as Mr. Ford went up to the third floor to look for Mr. Smithers, for they was a working late, you see, and Bill he thinks he must 'a forgot the trap-door and stepped backwards through it, or summat like that."

"Is he married?" asked the doctor.

"No, he ain't married, nor got no friends here as ever I heard tell of; he come from up north. Now what do you think ails him, doctor?"

"He has broken his ribs," answered he, "and I am afraid there are worse internal injurics. Are you sure he has no friends? they should be called at once if he had. Where is Mrs. Smart?"

"They are gone for a holiday," answered Mrs. Pridden, "and the house is all shut up, else we should 'a carried him there, where he'd 'a been more comfortable like: it's a unked thing to make your last end in a office."

"We must try to pull him through," said the doctor, but he did not look hopeful.

It was fully an hour before Ford showed any sign of returning consciousness, but at last the watchers at his side saw his eyelids flutter, and a faint colour tinge his cheek. Then his eyes fully opened, and he looked round him with a wondering gaze. The doctor made him take some of Mrs. Pridden's brandy, and spoke cheerfully to him, and he seemed to draw his breath with less difficulty.

"How long——?" he asked at last, in a faint painful whisper.

The doctor bent over him, listening for more.

"How long shall I live?" he asked.

"Oh, a long while yet, I hope," said the doctor; "you must not lose heart, and we will set you up again. Is there any one you would like sent for?"

"I am dying, doctor," he said; "I feel it." And then he closed his eyes and lay silent.

There was a little group of the men from the mill outside, waiting for news of the injured man, and one of them gently tapped at the outer door. Mrs. Pridden went out and gave them her version of Ford's case, with all the gusto for sickness peculiar to women of the lower working classes to whom the stimulating and dramatic comes chiefly in the form of suffering and horror.

While she was gone, Ford spoke again; very earnestly, this time, with his bright, dark eyes fixed on the doctor's face.

"Will you ask her to come? I think she would. There is no one else."

"Who is it?" asked the doctor.

"Miss Crossfield," whispered Ford.

The doctor thought his patient was wandering, and made no answer.

"Send for her soon, please," said Ford, "the time is short."

"Miss Marion Crossfield, from the Green?" asked the doctor, still incredulous.

"Yes, there is only one," answered Ford.

In the presence of that grim master of the ceremonies, Death, social distinctions are of small account. The dying man was Marion's equal now; his tongue was unloosed, and he would tell her all that was in his heart, if she would come and hear him, and he felt certain, knowing what she was, that she would come.

The doctor summoned Mrs. Pridden, and resolved to fetch Marion himself.

"Drive to Mr. Crossfield's as fast as you can," said he to his coachman; "stay, no—to Mr. Vickars'—there is a party there, and she was going to it," he added, looking at his watch, and seeing that the hands pointed to eleven o'clock.

As he was rapidly whirled into the town, Dr. Scott wondered within himself at Ford's request, and still harboured the uncomfortable doubt as to whether he had known what he asked. Would Miss Crossfield be willing to go back with him? and, if she did not, how should he pacify his unhappy patient?

He got down at Mr. Vickars' house, and rang the bell with nervous sharpness. The windows were all lit up, and there was a sound of gay music; there was a bank of flowers in the hall, and as the footman opened the door a flood of light streamed out into the dark street.

"I want to speak to Miss Crossfield," said the doctor. "I will stay here if you will send her to me. There is no time to lose, so find her as quickly as you can."

With an alarmed look, the man quickly departed on his mission, but the few minutes of his absence seemed hours to the impatient doctor. The contrast between the scene he had left and the lights and music and flowers struck so painfully on even his practised nerves that it almost unmanned him, and he wished the business well over.

Bright figures moved across the hall, and turned to stare at him, and in one of the rooms opening out of it a dance tune struck up and he could hear the measured rhythm of the dancers' feet. Was she never coming? Yes, at last. In a rich silvery dress, with jewels on neck and arms, she came swiftly along the corridor, and ran towards him as he stood among the flowers.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried, pale and trembling, "my father——"

"No, not your father, Miss Crossfield. There has been a bad accident at Smart's mill; their clerk has fallen through a trap-door and is very much injured, and he wishes to see you. Do you know anything of him?"

"I will come at once," she answered, to the doctor's surprise and relief. "My cloak, Mary," she cried to a passing maid.

"Will he recover?" she asked abruptly.

"I do not think he can live through the night,"

answered the doctor, and she said nothing more, but took her seat in the carriage beside him, muffled in her wraps, and leaning back so that he could not see her face.

The doctor handed her out at the office door, and led her to the place where poor Ford was lying. The miller's wife sat watching him, with a dismal face.

"Come into this room, for a moment, Mrs. Priddon," said the doctor, passing into the mill, and shutting the door of communication.

Marion knelt on the floor beside the dying man, and took his cold hand in hers that was scarcely less cold. He was breathing with difficulty, and each breath was like a knife stabbing him.

"I am so very, very sorry," she murmured; "you wished to speak to me? oh, I wish I had known earlier; I would have come at once to you. If only I could help you!"

He was looking at her all the while, with a strange light in his eyes, and in a few moments his breathing grew less difficult, and he gasped.

"I wanted you to know—I wanted to tell you myself—it cannot harm you now—how I have loved you—always. You will not be angry?"

For answer she stooped and kissed him. Still holding his hand, she sank beside the mattress, and laid her disengaged arm behind his head.

"Now I die happy—so happy," he whispered; "it is too good."

For a long time they were silent, his strength ebbing slowly, but surely.

"We shall meet again," she said with a sad smile; "I will come to you there!"

It had often troubled her that her faith in a future life was so vague and faint, and at times altogether clouded, but now her faith was firm. It could not end thus, and for him and for herself Heaven was so necessary that she could not doubt.

Without, the mill-stream flowed on, dark and silent under the stars, and within they kept watch beside a deeper river. The birds began to twitter in the elms, and there was a reddening light on the distant horizon, when he drew his last breath with his eyes looking into hers.

In the churchyard, not far from where the old miller lies, there is a grave with a marble cross, and, in summer or winter, there are always fresh flowers there, placed by the same tender hands.

Marion Crossfield has never married. She wears on her bosom a lock of black hair streaked with grey, and will wear it till such time as she meets Lester Ford again.

R O N D E L.

(*For Music.*)

THOSE gentle eyes of lilac blue,
More tender far than infant skies,
The armour of my heart broke through,
Those gentle eyes.

And I, so brave in strength and size,
The scorner! must my scorning rue,
And kneel, their constant sacrifice.
Those gentle eyes so filled with dew,
Sweet flowers that I have learned to prize—
Ah! will they grant me all I sue,
Those gentle eyes?

BERNARD WELLES.

LUTCHINA, OR THE BLUE LAKE,

BY A. POCKLINGTON.

PART I.

CHAPTER X.

FROM THE LAKE.

THE sky was black; there was no sign of any moon yet. But it was not to the Blue Lake that the Baroness fought her way against the raging winds, but homewards to the Schloss. Everything seemed asleep when she reached it; but that was not to be wondered at, for as she stepped across the threshold the old turret clock tolled out the hour of midnight. The measured strokes were caught up by the wind and flung to and fro, till it seemed a long dismal knell that was ringing. The Baroness shuddered and crept into the hall, which would have been dark but for the faint glimmer of a light which seemed passing through a side corridor. Lutchina hung back at first in the shadows; then, nerved by some secret resolution, went forward to meet whomsoever held it. It was her husband. He was on his way upstairs. With his foot on the lowest step, the Baron turned and saw the white and forlorn woman behind him. His face grew as white as hers, white with scorn and wrath unspeakable. He drew himself to his full height and gazed down on her, all the pride of all the Wolfthurns gathered together in his blue eyes. It was a look that kills. Then he spoke. "Go," he said, "I do not want you—go!" Then he turned his back on her and went slowly up the stairs; the light from his taper flickered on carved oak, gleamed on the limbs of a statue, went out, and all was dark.

The Baroness waited till his last step had died away; she threw up her hands as if to take a mute farewell of all within the Schloss, then left it. Her husband had been cold to her of late, had treated her like a stranger, yet always with infinite courtesy. Now he had spoken to her as if she had been a dog, or worse. She understood that by some means he knew all—that in his eyes she had done an unpardonable thing. "I do not want you," he had said; "Go!" For one moment Lutchina paused beside the old Schloss door; then, as a vivid sheet of flame shot across the heavens, setting her brain on fire, she fled. Away over the green sward, away under the groaning trees, away to the Blue Lake. There would be no moon to rise above the fire that night, but there was light enough without it. Every second the lightning flashed out from under the black arch of sky till the earth seemed in a blaze; the very air smelt sulphurous. Lutchina ran, the flames seeming to lick her feet, to hover round her, as blinded and terror-stricken she fled through their baleful fires towards the lake. Would Melchior be there? He was not there, and she was glad. She stood quite alone on the brink of the mysterious waters, whose bosom, sheltered from the tempest, lay almost unruffled, save in the centre, where great eddies ran circling into one another as silently and smoothly as if the lake was filled

with oil. In the storm of wind, a tree torn up by the roots crashed now and again in the surrounding woods; above every other sound rose the sullen roar of the stream which flowed with resistless power from the lake. A constant glare lit up the desolate scene. Like Lutchina, no tears seemed able to come to the relief of Nature; the sky and the earth seemed in throes.

There was no one in sight as the pale Baroness climbed into a boat, whose stem lay beside her, half-buried in grasses; that same old boat in which she and Melchior had one day sat together and pushed out on to sunny waters. She did not touch an oar, but the skiff, as if troubled by her action, quivered through every beam, and caught at once by an under-current, bore its frail burden towards the centre of the lake. There, in obedience to the swirling eddies, it revolved slowly, and Lutchina, leaning over its side, gazed down into the weird depths.

The old legend which had been dimly shaping itself in her over-wrought brain as she hurried to the spot, now seized upon her with alluring force. The bones of the dead trees that gleamed up through the water at every fiery flash, grew to be like so many enticing arms thrust spirit-wise towards her.

"Come," the enchanted lake seemed to murmur through its encircling eddies; "come and shroud thy pain within my breast. The foul I bury under my caverns, but the pure I cast up amongst the flowers—the white lillies, the blue forget-me-nots. Cast thy fate into my hands, nor fear to die. When the light of love and trust is gone from life, then, oh heavy-hearted one, it is well to feel Death's healing arms about thee!"

Head and heart were on fire as Lutchina hung over the boat; a little wave thrust up its lip and kissed her on the face—such a cool, sweet kiss, it sealed her fate.

"I am innocent—I am innocent!" cried the Baroness aloud, with a little sob, as she stepped from the boat straight into the gleaming water.

The next moment a terrible cry rang through the night—a cry in a man's voice.

"Lutchina! Lutchina!"

But Lutchina's ears were deaf to every cry now.

Melchior, for it was he, ran horror-stricken to the edge of the lake, and, clothed as he was, plunged into its baleful depths. He had been watching for the Baroness in the woods, but had missed her: when he turned to keep his evil tryst by the water, it was in time only to see her slip into its cold embrace.

Count Melchior was a strong swimmer, but the lightning blinded, and the chill under-currents repulsed him. What ailed his limbs that night? What had happened to the lake? He saw the white robe of her he loved floating nearer and nearer to the stream that rushed from the lake, but he could not reach it. Something clogged his feet; something, as he wrestled madly with the whirlpool in the centre, caught him by the middle and bore him downwards; the boat, revolving slowly, hovered always beyond his grasp. In a few short moments the Count grew weary of the struggle; he threw up his arms over his head and was sucked into the heart of the lake.

It was about that hour that Matthias left the mill. He had come to himself not long after

Lutchina had left; waking to find his wound neatly bound, and traces of a visitor's presence about him. A bowl of water stood ready to his hand to drink, the hearth had been swept up, a pot of flowers which he remembered to have seen falling when he stumbled, stood now upright on the table. "It is my lad, Karl," he thought; "he must have looked in when passing homewards." He felt stiff, and did not seem to be able to use his brain at will. His ears were full of the sound of bells—bells and rushing water. He threw open the casement and the lightning flashed in; from the old Schloss turret came the wail of midnight chimes. Then the roar of the Lutchina drowned everything else, and the miller woke from his lethargy and went out to see to the safety of his cattle-sheds and mill-wheel; for once or twice in a generation the river had been known to rise above its banks and devastate the valley.

He made his way against the fierce tempest of wind, and by the glare of the lightning saw that as yet all was well; but the Lutchina flowed now like a vast, deep river; the mysterious springs of the Blue Lake had burst their bonds, and, welling up through the fissures in its bed, had turned the pretty stream of a few hours before into a mighty torrent. Matthias, standing under the mill-wheel, watched its course.

The water flowed steadily, but here and there its bosom was strewn with branches, torn by the wind off the trees, and once, as the miller gazed, there passed before him a little bird, which, flung from its warm nest, now fluttered its wings feebly in the water and cried to be saved. He thrust his stick out to reach it, but it was too short; the bird sank just as something else came floating down the swollen stream to arrest his attention. This time it was a great limb off a pine; its branches were twisted and tangled together, and in the network of wet foliage there gleamed something white.

It came swiftly nearer and nearer, was caught by an eddy and washed into a hollow of the bank, then it came on more slowly—a strange raft with the white tangled in its midst—more slowly still, till it laid itself and burden at the miller's feet, who straightway fell on his knees beside it, white as he had never yet been; for this time it was no bird, no, nor even a crumpled rose that the waters had tossed idly to his feet, but a drowned woman.

CHAPTER XI.

"LET IT WAIT."

It was perhaps three years after these things. One day Matthias, for he still owned the mill, was seated busily working at one of his wooden models, when there came to him through the open doorway, it being summer, the sound of prattle and laughter. Looking up, he saw coming along the garden pathway a strange couple—an old man and a little child. The child dragged the old man along by one finger, his blue eyes danced with glee, he shouted aloud in baby tones of triumph, for he rode on the old man's stick.

Matthias rose as the two reached the door, a look of mingled pain and confusion suffusing his

face. He doffed his cap. "Welcome, Herr Baron," said ha.

The high born have almost to a greater extent than their humbler brethren the faculty of hiding their pain.

The Baron's heart was sore that day, for it was the first he had been home for three years, but he did not show it. "Yea, friend Matthias," said he, "I am back once more at the Schloss. This little fellow captured me as I passed thy gate. Thou art married then?"

The miller shook his head. "It is not my child."

"Whose then?"

"My sister's."

"Ah." A simple exclamation, but spoken with a shuddering sigh. Once the Baron had dreamed of holding just such a little son in his own arms. He turned his eyes from the child, whose head made sunshine in a dim corner, and looked out across the garden; "Matthias," said he, then paused; "thou hast found nothing as yet?"

The miller knew at once to what he alluded. He was silent a moment, then answered, "I have found nothing, Herr Baron."

The Baron looked suddenly into his face, it was as if something in the man's tone denied the words.

"I have heard something," said Matthias, slowly fingering his moustache, and answering the unspoken question.

"So?"

"I have heard the truth."

The Baron stood irresolute a moment, then without looking again at Matthias he left the mill.

The miller caught the rosy child into his arms and watched the old man pace down the path. The burden of sixty years seemed to weigh on him greatly—he leaned heavily on his staff, and kept his eyes on the ground as he walked. "He suffers," said the miller to himself, "but he is proud. Perhaps he will not come again."

But the Baron did, after a little while, come a second time to the mill, and his first question as he crossed the threshold was, "Where is the child?"

Matthias went away to seek it, and presently laid the babe on the old man's knee, where it nestled comfortably and played with his seals.

The miller watched the two, an unutterable light in his grave eyes. He sighed when more plainly than before he saw the ravages that trouble had committed on the Baron—in truth the storm of three years since had laid an indelible hand on him; his countenance was furrowed and wrinkled with care. Old Jossi had been quite right about that storm. It was one that would never be forgotten. The Schloss chapel had been struck by the lightning that night, and its roof demolished, but not till the morning broke was it discovered that the Baroness was missing. In his room the Baron found a missive from Count Melchior, stating in brief words that the rambler's spirit was upon him again, and that he might be absent from the Schloss a few months; but of Lutchina there was no trace whatever until the sun shone out again on the second day after her disappearance, when chance took old Jossi and a party of searchers to the Blue Lake. The water was thick and troubled as it had never been, the hidden springs

still welled up through its breast, forming wild eddies and whirlpools, no bottom could be seen; but where the Lutchina had its outlet lay the old boat half filled with water, and in it the Baroness's cloak. Then they said she must be dead, and all but ill blood sprang up between them and one of their number, a young man who had given out that in hurrying through the wood skirting the lake when the storm commenced he had seen a white figure run betwixt the trees, and soon after been startled by a terrible cry. Then he had turned his back and fled, for as every one amongst them knew it was death to meet the spirit of the haunted lake. Now Jossi bowed his old head and told them it must have been the Baroness; strange though it seemed, she must have been straying out on this fearful night, and, bewildered with terror, have attempted to cross the waters. There was no doubt about it, since she lay not under any fallen tree—the Baroness was drowned. So Jossi went sadly back to the Schloss, and laid the cloak at his master's feet. There was no need for any words; it told its own story. But whatever the Baron's thoughts he kept them to himself, and Grutli being gone, for she never returned to the Schloss, he was able to keep his own secrets and draw his own conclusions as to his young wife's fate.

Ill news travels apace, and the Countess Elizabeth was quick to learn the misfortune that had overtaken her kinsman. "I said it would happen," she said to herself, as she packed up her knitting and her black robes, and got into her travelling carriage; "I said it would happen." She drove by hurried stages to the Schloss, and found the Baron broken in health as well as spirit. But the old man was as full of pride as of pain. "Peace, peace!" he cried, sternly, as the Gräfin shook her curls over him, and this miserable ending to his second love-marriage. "Peace, woman! nor name that name to me again." Before many days the subterranean springs sank back into their wonted courses, and the Blue Lake smiled calmly in the sun as before, yet it yielded no sign nor token of Lutchina, but jealously guarded its dead. Then the Gräfin Elizabeth bore away her cousin from the Schloss and its dismal recollections; she nursed him through an illness in her own house, and after it took him travelling with her. Now, in spite of her entreaties, he was come home again. "The Schloss will feel very empty," he had said, with the gentle patience of the aged, "but I was born in it and must die in it." She was there too; nothing indeed now seemed likely to send her from its walls unless it were Melchior's return. But of that there was still no sign. Where Melchior could be was indeed a mystery; nothing had been seen or heard of him in the lands through which they passed; sometimes the Baron's heart was dull with forebodings—was he childless as well as widowed? Before he left, the Baron had laid a solemn charge in the hands of Matthias. Jossi was growing old; now that his spirit was broken as his master's eyes and limbs seemed failing him—but the Baron remembered that he had in old days taken note of the miller's devotion to his taciturn master—no gentler hand surely could be found to raise from the waters whatsoever they cast up. And Matthias, the tears standing in his eyes, promised to watch the lake and its quiet

shores, and to guard everything that was found upon them. But the waters held their peace, and threw up not so much as a ribbon or a torn fragment of dress. Thus much the Baron knew after his first visit to the mill. On this occasion he seemed but to have come to fondle the babe, unless it were for the reason he gave the miller, that he liked to see him at his work. But in truth men return to the birthplace of their sorrows as to their joys, and it may have been that the old mill spoke to the Baron in hushed accents of one who was not, at once keeping alive yet soothing the dull aching of his heart.

"Matthias," said the Baron, as he watched the delicate manipulation of the tools in the miller's deft hands, and saw him hang a wheel lovingly on its slender pivot, "thou must stay no longer in this place. Travel and visit the cities. Thou wilt be known one day."

"I suppose so," answered the miller simply, conscious of inborn power. Then he sighed. "But I have work to finish here first."

"More work?"

"In truth, yes. See, Herr Baron," continued the miller, as he smoothed a jagged end of wood, "gaps come into life as well as models—it is as hard sometimes to bring two together as it is to dovetail these pieces of chesnut."

"To whom do you allude?" asked the Baron, a little wonder in his eyes.

"To my sister. She and her husband are fallen out together."

"Ah, and you would make them one?"

"Please God," said the miller piously.

"It is like playing with lighted tow, you may chance to burn your fingers," said the Baron. "Whatever the lot of the peacemaker in heaven, it is an uneasy one on earth. Beware, friend."

"I am not afraid," answered calm Matthias.

The next time the Baron visited the mill, the miller met him with a sad face. The child was ill.

"What ails it?" asked the Baron.

"We cannot tell, its mother and I. She is distracted."

"Ah, she lives with you." Then, after a pause, "have you brought them together yet?"

"No," answered the miller dejectedly. "It is harder than I thought. You see, when the trouble began they misunderstood one another, and then each is proud."

The Baron seemed to take an interest in the history of these strangers. "How came the trouble about?" he asked.

"A third came between them."

The Baron started. Presently he said, "And a third tries to join them. They say there is luck in odd numbers. I pray it may be so in your case."

"Amen," said Mathias solemnly, and the Baron went away.

That same afternoon, the Gräfinn called at the mill. On her approach, a woman, in peasant's dress, who was lulling the babe to sleep by the fire, moved hurriedly into an adjoining room and the Countess was met by the miller alone.

"I have come to see the sick child," she said, for she had a charitable heart and loved to dispense her gifts with her own hands, especially those in medicine, having, like some good women, a maxim to bestow with every pill.

Matthias fetched the babe, and laid it, as the bade, in her lap. Its heavy eyes were closed, its little features like wax, it lay quite still and hardly breathed.

"How long has it been thus?" asked the lady, staring steadfastly on the child.

"Perhaps three weeks, noble Frau."

"You have let it play too long by the river—it has caught a chill—the poor little one is dying of a low fever."

"Dying? Ah no!" The miller's face grew as white as the child's.

"Well, it is very ill, and such things always go worse with strong children—this seems a sturdy fellow. Let me see its mother."

"She is resting; she has not lain down for nights."

With a little sigh, the child opened its eyes and fixed them on the Countess's hard features. Such eyes—blue as gentians, and full of that pathetic mute appeal seen in the eyes only of suffering babes and animals. The Countess caught her breath a moment, and gazed with a look grown suddenly troubled on the child's face. Where had she seen those eyes before?

The baby turned on her lap, smiled faintly, and tried to lift its feeble arms towards Matthias. The miller caught it to his breast with a half-choked sob. "It must not die," he said.

"Well, well, we are all in the good God's hands," returned the Gräfinn, with serene piety. "Bid the mother come to the Schloss to-night for medicine and wine, a walk will do her good."

So she went away, walking thoughtfully down the path. Her black robe trailed in the dust; such a thing had never happened to it before.

But it was Matthias and no anxious-eyed woman who called to fetch the medicine from the Schloss. The Gräfinn laid a little basket in his hand and gave her directions. "It was the mother I wished to see," she said, in displeased tones.

"Just so, Frau. But she prays your pardon—she is still faint from over-watching."

"Well, do not forget all I have told you, and send to me for anything further that is wanted."

Matthias bowed and left. It was such a beautiful soft night the Baron went with him as far as the Schloss gates.

"The child's illness troubles thee greatly, friend," said he, taking note of the miller's silence, "and truly it is hard when the little ones suffer. I remember once when Melchior was just so ill—"

The miller's mouth quivered. "The child's death will be that of its mother," said he laconically.

"I remember it well," continued the Baron, whose thoughts like those of the aged often rambled back to the past; "always a strange quiet child, he lay so still then—he was at death's door; it might have been better had he died," ended the old man, pausing abruptly in his walk to look at the stars which gleamed down from the sky like the pure eyes of angels. They had almost reached the gates. "Herr, you have heard nothing of him?" asked Matthias.

The Baron shook his head. "Nor anyone else," said he. "It has never been so before, for though I might not see him he would write. But now since the night of the storm all is blank to me—all mystery. Why do you ask?"

"Baron, I said once that though I found nothing I had heard something."

The Baron leaned heavily on his stick as he replied, "Aye, you told me you had heard the truth; but I kept silent, for my heart misgave me. The truth may be a terrible one to hear. And, good Matthias, I have borne so much—there is no pain like that of an old wound reopened."

The miller sighed. "That is true," said he, looking at the sorrowful white head beside him. "Still, perhaps, I have been silent on my side too long. Will the Herr let me tell him what I know now?"

"No," said the Baron, "let it wait. A mother watches for thee, and thy heart is full of the child. It was so with me when Melchior was sick. Go, and when all is well in the mill come back to me on some such night and I will hear thy tale."

He pushed the miller gently through the gate and closed it upon him.

"I doubt that he will believe me," thought Matthias moodily as he hurried homewards; "if she had but let me speak! But she will have it he does not want her—that he needs only Count Melchior."

(To be concluded in next number.)

IN THE TIME OF ROSES.

WHERE the roses bend at summer's greeting,

Coy as maid when Hope's young tale is told,
Love! thy life and mine are surely meeting

In the promise that the hours unfold:
Birds and flowers our own love-words repeating
To the brook that questions yonder wold.

What! though summer come all crowned with roses,

What! though days seem ever full of sweets,
Were it not that hour by hour discloses
Trust and truth from love that firmer beats,
Where would be the joy that now reposes
In all Nature every hour that fleets?

What is in the future grey, mist-hidden?

Asks my heart as rosy buds uncurl,
And the tears start forth unchecked, unbidden,
Darkening as the shadow in a pearl.
Will the sea of life be tempest-ridden
When our hopes like white-winged sails unfurl?

Could rich measure of delight be ours?

In the future that our spirit craves,
Did we look in vain for love's lost flowers,
Clasping hands o'er snowdrop-whitened graves,
Listening to a sound from birdless bowers,
Lone as ocean voice in coral caves?

Yet, oh heart! one thought more precious
ingers,

High o'er earthly hopes we prize so much;
As the mellow sunset gently fingers
Every rose-bloom with a loving touch—
"God is nigh to His true sorrow-singers;
Child-like be—Heaven's kingdom is of such."

HARRIET KENDALL.

GHOSTS WHOM WE HAVE MET.

BY F. BAYFORD HARRISON.

IN winter by the cheerful fire, or in summer under the greenwood tree, when time seems to hang a little heavy, and our spirits run a little low, there often comes the request, "Tell us a ghost story." At once, time is shortened and our hearts enlivened by a series of thrilling tales. One account of a ghostly visitant leads on to another; each person present has known somebody whose friend, or friend's friend, has seen or heard something strange and unaccountable. But we notice that all these tales come at second or third hand. Now, what we want, whether as matter for investigation or only as a means of setting our hair on end, is a harrowing ghost story at first hand. We long to hear our entertainer say, "I saw it, I heard it, it happened to me."

I have set myself the task of collecting authentic tales of mystery, and I propose giving them in the exact words of those persons who have met the ghosts face to face. I shall alter nothing, except that for names of people and places I shall put initials.

I have a friend, a very sensible woman, the wife of a lawyer, who writes to me as follows. I may premise that she and her husband had been dining with a gentleman and his wife who live in the City, in rooms over the gentleman's office. Mrs. A—— says:—

"I do not think my ghost story good enough, as I only saw, or thought I saw, a figure in white rush up the staircase, and my impression was that a servant had been listening at the door in her night-dress, and when my friend opened the door we disturbed the lady; about 1 A.M. But my friend said, 'No,' that they often saw the same sort of thing, and also strange noises are of very constant occurrence."

This tale is not a very exciting one; the chief point of interest is that the appearances and noises occur in a business house in the City of London, and are seen and heard by very practical persons.

Another friend of mine says:—

"My brother was at one time in charge of a country parish in Shropshire, and I lived with him in the old vicarage. At night we often heard in one room most unaccountable noises, like heavy furniture being dragged and thrown about. Our neighbours, of course, said, 'Rats,' but I do not think it possible that any rats in the world could have made such noises."

I inquire, "Did no one ever go into the room while these noises were making themselves heard?"

Miss B—— says, "No one ever had sufficient courage."

My next story comes from Ireland, from Newlands, a few miles out of Dublin. Mr. C—— is one of a well-known and influential Irish family, his wife, Amy, is my cousin. I asked Amy's mother to write out for me the story, and this is what she sends me in a letter.

"You asked about the carriage story, about which there is little to tell, beyond the fact that when Lord Kilwarden was murdered in the streets

of Dublin during the Rebellion,* the carriage, with or without coachman no one ventures to depose, returned to Newlands at eleven or twelve, without the master, and that ever since a noise as of a carriage coming up the avenue, and driving up to the door is supposed to be heard. The C—'s servant, when watching for his master's return one night when he had been detained in town, heard, as he thought, the wheels, and, I believe, told Amy that his master was coming up the avenue, and then returned to the hall door, and remarked to himself, "They have not lighted the lamps." He waited, hearing it come nearer, as the avenue to that place is rather a long one, when he declared a carriage drove up to the door, and then turned round and drove away again. The man, who had always laughed at the story was undoubtedly frightened; but I am inclined to think the distant railway may have had something to say to the noise, to which his expectations and imaginations lent a colour, or rather a sound."

Thus writes my friend, and this story unfortunately I could not obtain in the first person. I give it for what it is worth. Mr. C— rented Newlands for some years, and everyone heard the noise, but the servant aforesaid seems to have been the only person who saw the ghostly carriage.

No doubt, when the report of a place being haunted gets well rooted in one's mind, one is predisposed to see and hear unaccountable things, and I fancy that the scoffing frame of mind is the most favourable for such sights and sounds; the calm, judicial temperament which neither affirms nor denies is that with which one would like to endow those persons who by chance or by choice are in a position to investigate ghost stories.

But I am not intending either to moralize on my stories, or to explain them; I simply leave my reader to draw his own conclusions. I will therefore proceed to my next tale, of which the scene is laid in London.

The haunted house in Berkeley Square has for some time past been a not unfrequent topic of conversation. The story told to me was as follows:—

A family not at all afraid of ghosts rented this haunted house, and on the first night of their occupancy one of the sons declared his intention of sleeping in the suspected room. He did so, and in the morning was found to be a raving lunatic, who could give no account of what had happened during the night. Another son, nothing daunted, resolved the next night to sleep in the haunted chamber. The other members of the family, presumably the sane ones, declared that they would sit up all night in case he should want their assistance. Moreover, he took with him two dogs, and the bell-pull was placed on his pillow, so that he could instantly use it if anything alarmed him.

The house was not disturbed, and at getting-up time his friends went to the room. He lay dead in the bed with an expression of intense fear and horror on his face; his hand was outstretched, as if endeavouring to grasp the bell-pull; the two dogs lay dead on the floor.

So ended this terrible story.

A very shrewd friend of mine, Miss D— (who shall tell her own ghost story presently), to whom this was told, inquired—

"What was the verdict of the coroner's jury?"

Her query was not answered.

The idea of a ghost whose habitat was close to Piccadilly and Bond Street so caught my fancy that I determined to investigate the matter. I went to Berkeley Square, and looked about for some local authority whom I might interview. To my joy, I saw approaching an elderly and intelligent-looking turncock.

Said I to him—

"Can you tell me which is the house they call the 'haunted house'?"

"Oh yes," he replied; "it's over there—No. 51."

I looked where he pointed, and saw a very dirty and dingy house.

"They are going to pull it down," said the turncock.

"Indeed!"

"Yes; the lord next door has bought it, and he's going to have it pulled down. It's been in Chancery."

"Been in Chancery?"

"Ah, these twenty years—I've known it twenty years."

"And did you hear of its being haunted?" I asked.

"Yes; it's been said to be haunted these twenty years. There was two females in charge of it, and there was one room where such funny noises was heard that they said it must be haunted."

"Well," said I, "people have talked a great deal about it. Did you ever hear of two gentlemen sleeping there, and one going mad, and the other being found dead?"

"No"—with a superior smile—"no, I never heard tell of any such story as that."

"Thank you very much," I said. "I will just take a look at the house. I am much obliged to you; good-day."

The turncock touched his hat and went his way. I gave a good stare at the haunted house, and went on to the Royal Academy. I cannot help suspecting that the "two females" must know what it is that haunts that noisy room.

Miss D—'s own ghost story is this:—

"I was nursing my sister in her last illness, and had gone to bed in a room adjoining hers, very tired. I awoke in the early morning, and saw my mother, who slept in another room, standing by my bedside. She had round her shoulders a little shawl such as she often wore, and she held her finger to her lips. I sat up in bed and whispered, 'What is the matter?' At the same time I much wondered how my mother had come there, knowing, as I did, that the outer doors of my sister's room and of mine were both locked. As I gazed at my mother's face, and awaited her reply, her figure vanished. I then saw, on a hook opposite the foot of my bed, some garments which I had hastily hung there the previous night; over them I had flung a little shawl in exactly the same folds as that worn by the apparition of my mother. I concluded that on suddenly awaking my eyes had received the impression of those garments, and

* Arthur Wolfe, Viscount Kilwarden, Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, was killed by a mob in the streets of Dublin, July 28, 1803.

before having time to focus themselves had transferred it to my bedside; imagination invented my mother's face and finger."

I am inclined to agree with Miss D—— in her explanation of her ghost; for I know, as I suppose we all know, how oddly the furniture in a room misplaces itself when we waken suddenly; the window often crosses to the opposite wall, and is several seconds before returning to its usual and real position. Our senses are very easily deceived. In the silence of the night we often hear noises, persons talking, distant bells ringing, burglars breaking into the house, and other strange sounds which we cannot even ascribe to the agency of cats.

My brother has written the following in a letter to me:—

"I was once lodging for a short time in an old house at Exeter. I had my family with me and two nurses. The latter slept together at the top of the house. After a day or two they began to complain of queer sensations which they had both experienced each night. They said it felt as if the bed in which they were lying was lifted up from time to time. I set it down to imagination, but my wife mentioned the matter to our landlady, who replied that it was nothing new, many of her successive lodgers having made similar complaints. I never heard any explanation of the phenomenon, but I believe it must have been due to the vibration caused by passing trains, though the railway did not run anywhere near the house."

It appears that railways are nowadays accredited with those strange noises which formerly were attributed to ghosts.

A short time ago I was told by friends that the Rev. J. E—— had recently given them an account of a ghost whom he had met. Mr. E—— had gone to stay a few days in a large old country house. On the day of his arrival, as he was coming down stairs shortly before the dinner hour, he saw, just in front of him, a lady dressed in a black velvet gown, also apparently going down to dinner. He followed at a short distance, but did not see which way she turned when she arrived at the bottom of the stairs. Mr. E—— went into the drawing-room. The guests assembled; and presently the lady of the house said, "I think dinner may be served as we are all here."

"Will you not wait for the other lady?" asked Mr. E—— as a reminder to his hostess, who seemed to have quite forgotten one of her guests.

"What other lady?" she asked.

"The lady in black velvet," Mr. E—— replied, "who came down stairs just in front of me."

"Oh! have you seen her?" cried the hostess; "many people have seen her; she is often about the house."

Then Mr. E—— discovered that the missing guest was a ghost.

Now, I had only heard this story at second-hand; but having the pleasure of knowing Mr. E—— I wrote to ask him to be kind enough to write out the circumstances of his vision. Here is his reply:—

"I am sorry I cannot supply you with a ghost story. The lady in black velvet was not a friend of mine—but a friend of a friend of mine: so I cannot speak in the first person of her."

This was very disappointing.

Indeed, I have met with many disappointments in my search for ghosts. Several times I have

thought that I had tracked one to his lair, and then, spirit-like, he has eluded my grasp. The other day, looking over some old letters, I came across one from a cousin of mine, now deceased. He wrote thus:—

"We form a large household. Do you remember the house? Old Dr. F—— lived in it, and still haunts it. We could tell you some extraordinary stories about him. He raps at the doors, and walks up and down stairs, and flings the ends of cigars about when we are smoking pipes. We are quite at home with him, and speak familiarly to him when he commences his pranks. He has been very quiet lately."

After reading this old letter I wrote to my cousin's widow asking her to tell me in detail some of the "pranks" of Dr. F——. But I have not received any reply from her, and I suppose that either she cannot recall anything remarkable, or she does not wish to write of what she saw and heard. This haunted house is in Quebec, and "old Dr. F——" was a well-known and eccentric character in that city. It would seem that he still keeps up his eccentric conduct.

I am afraid that by this time my readers must be rather weary of reading about ghosts whom we have not met, and that they must begin to regard me as an impostor. But I have a reward for their patience, and a *bonne-bouche* to conclude with. I proceed to copy a paper kindly sent to me by a lady who actually saw and felt a ghost.

She writes:—

"More than twenty years ago I became acquainted with G. M——, a youth of amiable disposition and many excellent qualities, who had but just completed his university education, and for whom his father, a wealthy London merchant, had purchased a share in a ship-broking business in the port of C——. My husband, at that time occupying a consular post at C——, had met this young fellow at his club, where the local magnates frequently assembled to play whist and pool, had taken a great fancy to him, and brought him up to our house, where he became a frequent visitor. His fondness for music, literature, and athletic sports, to all of which my husband was ardently addicted, led to a close friendship and intimacy between the latter and G. M——, who was an excellent cricketer, horseman, jumper, and runner, as well as an accomplished classical scholar.

"For several months, until, indeed, the failure of his partner swept away the capital with which his father had started him in life, and compelled him to seek his fortune in lands beyond the sea, we saw a great deal of G. M——, and he became an element of our home-life. He accompanied us in country walks, played billiards with my husband, and joined the cricket club of which the latter was captain, read the books we read, took part in all our amusements, and was, indeed, quite *l'enfant de la maison*. We ourselves were young people, barely a year married, and took great delight in the society of one so near our own age, who, moreover, was of a singularly amiable disposition, gay, full of quaint humour and frank fun, and also sincerely attached to us both. Love begets love; we were very fond of G. M——, and when he was sent off to South Africa by his father on a second life-venture, we could not have been more grieved or forlorn had we lost a brother. In common with a distant cousin he became the

proprietor of a large tract of land in Natal, where he tried the experiment of scientific farming with Kaffre labour; and undiscouraged by mishap after mishap, stuck to his enterprise for six years, during which time his youngest brother had joined him, and we had three or four letters a-year from him, narrating some of his strange experiences and adventures. In all his letters he spoke hopefully of our meeting when his term of seven years should have elapsed.

In the summer of 1867, my husband being at that time absent on a special mission, I was staying with some very dear friends at Belgrade, the capital of Servia. It was the year of the Austrian Emperor's coronation as King of Hungary, which took place in the month of June. Semlin, a small town facing Belgrade on the opposite side of the Danube, was then, as it still is, the seat of a distinct military command; and the Imperial general there located had organized a banquet (given by himself and the officers of the garrison) in celebration of the event that completed the reconciliation between Austria and Hungary. To this festivity he invited the chief state officials of Servia and the members of the *corps diplomatique* resident at the Court of Prince Michael Obernovich. I, being a guest of the British diplomatic agent, the doyen of that corps, was included in the invitation, and attended the banquet, which was a splendid but somewhat noisy entertainment.

"I was seated between the Austrian and Italian diplomatic agents. Shortly after we had taken our places, I felt a hand pressing heavily on my left shoulder: turning round in surprise, I saw the figure of my friend G. M.—, standing close behind me, dressed in a light-coloured, rough shooting suit. As I caught sight of him, he turned away, and beckoned me to follow him. In the momentary glance I caught of him, I was struck by his paleness and the anxiety of his expression. I rose from my seat at once, got over the bench upon which I was sitting, (the banquet was given *al fresco* in a large garden,) and followed the figure. At the same time the Italian agent also rose and spoke to me, asking what had happened, and whether there was any one there to whom I wished to speak. I turned back to answer his question, and, when I again looked in the direction of the figure, it had vanished, nor could I find anybody who had seen it besides myself.

"This was the whole of the incident as far as I was concerned. A few minutes later the melancholy news reached our host that the Archduke Maximilian had been shot to death at Queretaro. As the murdered prince was the Emperor of Austria's brother, our festivity, I need scarcely say, came to an abrupt close.

"The sequel of this strange appearance may be told in a few words. Some months later my husband received from G. M.—'s brother the announcement of our friend's death in South Africa on June 19, 1867, at an hour which, allowing for the difference of time between the locality of his decease and that in which I saw his wraith, was exactly identical with the time at which he appeared to me. I do not pretend to explain this extraordinary coincidence; the facts are precisely as I have told them, and I must leave all comment upon them to those may read this 'plain unvarnished tale.'

"C. F.

Now, Mrs. F—, who thus met the ghost of her friend face to face, is a very practical person with no tendency to nervousness. She enters rather fully into the intimacy subsisting between herself and Mr. F— and young G. M— because this accounts, as far as anything can account for such an event, for the apparition. If a spirit on leaving this world could take a last farewell of any friend it would surely seek one whom it had known well and loved much. That Mrs. F— should have imagined the incident while her thoughts were fully and pleasantly occupied by a magnificent public spectacle is most unlikely. Again, the coincidence of time is fixed by the date of the banquet and by the brother's letter received some months afterwards. Perhaps some of my readers will find means of explaining away Mrs. F—'s story; but I suppose that if she wrote an account of any other event in her life they would accept it without question; is it then necessary to try and explain away what she has written as above?

Here endeth all that I have been able to discover of authentic ghost stories. It is a small result after so much work. I think it leaves the matter very much where Dr. Johnson left it; our reason is sceptical, but our instinct is credulous.

MY TREE.

I STOOD once more beneath the tree,
Old elm-tree broad and high,
Where oft I came at evening hour,
In days long, long, gone by.
There at its mossy foot full fain
To lay me down and weave
Fond fancies into poesie,
And fancies fond conceive.

Fair oasis 'mid wilds of life,
Calm refuge from the whirl
And worry of the haunts of men,
Where song of thrush or merle
Soon charmed away all thoughts of them
From willing mind of me,
And made the distant city's hum
A murmur of the sea.

Ah, dear old elm-tree! just the same,
Though ruthless years had wrought
Sad change in me since last we met,
Of hopes and aims and thought;
Since to thy shelter I returned
With each declining day,
And in sweet dreams of joy to come,
Dreamed all the past away.

There, on the old familiar scene,
I stood and gazed once more,
As 'twere but only yesterday
I thus had gazed before;
The shadowy glade, the colonnade,
With glinting gleams between,
The still sheep near, the distant mere,
Were as life had not been.

The same sly nooks in bank and brake
 Bowers of tangled bines,
 Dark vistas with an eye of light,
 And there the stately pines,
 Amid whose sable tops the sun
 Burned down upon his pyre,
 Till they themselves were all afame
 With unconsuming fire.

Upgazing through thy flickering leaves,
 A sunny shade that shed,
 Waving, as for remembrance sake,
 Fond welcome o'er my head,
 Again was I half lost in dreams
 Of thine own pristine day,
 When, haply, lovers sought thine aid,
 Long ages passed away!

Musing, I wondered o'er anew
 Thy lengthened secret span,
 Since thou a slender sapling grew,
 Ere that sweet time began;
 Came something of the sweetness, too,
 Of my own youthful morn,
 Soft as a fleeting springlike breeze
 Of autumn stillness born.

Then as I, sad, in pensive mood,
 Surveyed the changeless scene,
 While yet the truth, how vain were wish
 To be what I had been,
 From half unconscious consciousness
 Did waken gentle moan,
 Methought the tree, too, breathed a sigh
 Responsive to my own.

I hearkened, more in doubt than fear,
 Yet how distrust or why?
 Again, soft echoing back my thought,
 It answered sigh for sigh,
 As full well feeling, sure as I,
 Yea, to its inmost core,
 Those tranquil hours of days gone by
 For us would be no more.

* * * * *

Once more my footsteps sought the spot,
 And straight, unguided, found;
 The grand old elm-tree, reft in twain,
 Lay prostrate on the ground,
 All its brave branches, erst that waved
 So fondly o'er my head,
 And laughed and sung when I was young,
 Shattered and rent and shed!

What blight or blast, since we met last,
 What ruthless vengeance fell,
 What fiendish might, for sport or spite,
 Had done its work so well?
 Ah, dear old friend, though all must end,
 Ne'er dreamed I it could be
 The spot thy boon so charmed so soon
 Would know nor me nor thee!

ROBERT STEGGALL.

THE MYSTERY OF COMPTON PLACE.

A STORY IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.

BY LAURA VALENTINE,

Author of "A Puzzle for the Police," "The Knight's Ransom," &c. &c.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLOUD LIFTS.

ON arriving at the little country station near the Croft, the first person I saw on the platform was John Clifford, much older in appearance, it is true, but I recognized him immediately, and he knew me also, and came to hand me from the railway carriage.

"I am so glad to see you," he said heartily. "Miss Lee, you will be, I am convinced, of the greatest service to your sister; she does not look happy in her new life, and the idiots must try her sorely. She who always loved everything beautiful and intellectual!"

"It is the strangest thing," I exclaimed. "Of course they are doing great good, but why could they not do it differently? Why should they have fixed on idiots for their protégés?"

"Probably," he answered, "because the cousin, into whose place Mr. Lovel came, was an idiot. Do you not know that he (Mr. Lovel) was heir-at-law to Mr. Compton, whose own son and heir was an idiot? Surely you know that Compton Place and the old Dower House belong now to your sister's husband?" he added, seeing my look of perplexity.

"Good heaven!" I exclaimed. "No, I did not! How extraordinary that Edmund should never have told us! Does Gladys know?"

"Oh yes, of course; we often talk of Woodlands. But here is your sister," as Gladys appeared on the platform.

The next moment my sister had my hands in hers and was tenderly kissing me. She was in the dress of a nursing sister, and was very pale, but the simple garb and the face of saintly beauty made her more interesting than ever. She had lost her bloom and brightness, but she was unequalled Gladys still. She had a fly waiting outside the station for me and my luggage, and in it we drove to the Croft. The grand old park was cut up, but many fine trees were left, sheltering pretty rustic cottages that looked very abodes of domestic comfort and happiness. The women came to the doors and curtsied as we passed, the children smiled and kissed tiny hands to the good lady they loved.

"Mabel," said Gladys, smiling, "is not this better than a grand but lonely deer-park?"

"Yes," I agreed, "but I hope you have left a portion of the woodland for yourselves."

She did not answer, and we drove up to the fine old mansion called the Croft; one of the noblest Elizabethan houses in the kingdom, now the home of the most terribly afflicted of the children of men.

At the door Edmund came out to meet us. No,

I never should have known him ! His hair was quite white, contrasting disagreeably with his dark skin and eyelashes, and still brilliant eyes, and his brow bore untimely wrinkles. He greeted me very kindly, and led me through the noble hall, still furnished as it ought to be, up the great staircase, and along a corridor, till we reached a door that he opened, admitting us to a small but sunny room, bare of all furniture but a table, three or four chairs, a small couch, and a book-case. The table had a tea service on it, with bread, butter, and strawberries.

" You will have a chop up in a moment, Mabel," said my sister ; " but I dare say you will be glad to go first to your room to take off your travelling dress ? "

I said I should, and she led me down the same corridor to a very tiny room—a cell, in fact—which was, however, prettily furnished and decked with flowers. She opened a door, and showed me another cell adjoining it.

" This is your bathroom," she said. " I trust you will not mind the rooms being so small ; we have no others unoccupied."

" Are there any of your protégés, the idiots, sleeping near me ? " I asked a little nervously. I had a secret horror of persons mentally afflicted.

" Oh, no ; these are our own rooms," she said. " My room—my cell—is beside yours, and Edmund's is beside mine. You will be quite safe here, Mabel."

And thus began the strangest period of my life.

Our time, or rather the Lovels' time, was all parcelled out for various duties, as in a monastery. Unless I joined in them—and I confess that was but seldom, for I had a great repugnance to the poor, gibbering creatures to whom they devoted themselves—I was much alone ; but I took long walks in that portion of the park which was still left, and amongst the cottage lands, and made sketches, for I had studied in Italy, and was now thought a fairly good artist. Sometimes I went for an hour or two to the Rectory to chat with Mrs. Clifford, John's mother, now a widow, and residing with her son ; and every day Gladys took an hour's walk with me. A great change had evidently passed over her married life. Edmund, who had at first ruled her, though with tender love, was now almost reverential in his manner to her, but I thought was very little with her ; while she watched over him and cared for his comforts and his health as a mother might for her son, yet did not seek his society. She and I had our meals alone in her little sitting-room. They were very plain and simple, and I thought that Gladys's three hundred a year must more than suffice for our table and general expenses.

Mrs. Clifford often spoke to me with regret of what she called my brother and sister's mistaken self-sacrifice.

" They might have built an asylum for idiots," she said, " and even overlooked it themselves, without quitting the station in which God had placed them ; and surely they have a fair right to all the luxuries and refinements of their rank. They could live befittingly, and yet be most liberal and bountiful. It is very strange, since Mr. Lovel is not a Socialist—nay, John says he is a Conservative, as well as a good Churchman—that he

should have cut up his park into cottagers' holdings. In fact, Miss Lee, one cannot help feeling a little wonder at their proceedings. I don't think that your sister could bear the monotony of her life were it not for the trip they take every quarter."

" But those trips," said John thoughtfully, " do them no good. Mrs. Lovel always looks worse after them."

I was greatly perplexed. Where did they go, and why did they go, if not for pleasure ? I felt surrounded by an impenetrable cloud of mystery, but I resolved to ask Gladys to whom these periodical visits were paid. She answered me frankly enough.

" We go to see Teresa, the old nurse. Edmund thinks it right to do so."

" What ! the woman who nearly frightened you to death ? " I exclaimed, indignantly.

She nodded.

" Yes ; I have forgiven her. She is a very unsatisfactory old woman, but we try our best to bring her to think differently."

" Her face no longer frightens you then ? " I asked.

She shivered.

" I must own I do not like looking at her," she said ; " not because her face is frightful from scars and contractions, but because she has such a bad expression. I believe she hates me, Mabel, but I do all I can to soften her. By-the-by, I am glad that Mrs. Clifford told you of our quarterly visits, for one is now due, and I was going to ask you if you would mind our leaving you for three or four days—unless, indeed, you would rather go home ? It is very dismal here for you, my darling."

" Oh no," I said ; " I am always happy when I am with you. I shall not mind being alone at all."

But Mrs. Clifford would not hear of my being left at the Croft, and insisted on my going to stay with her at the Rectory, and there I spent one of the happiest periods of my life, for John Clifford told me one day how long he had loved me, how hopeless that love had seemed till Edmund gave him the living he now held, and asked me to be his wife. I answered him with happy tears, and whispered how I also had loved and been faithful.

Mrs. Clifford was delighted at our engagement, and a few days brought my father's consent and my stepmother's congratulations.

John and I were so happy we scarcely noticed that my sister's absence was prolonged for nearly a fortnight. At length a letter came from Gladys to me, telling me that they would be at home that evening, and I joyfully prepared to return to the Croft to be ready to receive them, and talk over my happiness with my sister.

I waited for them in our little sitting-room, which I had made gay with flowers ; I did not care to risk seeing any of the boys by lingering in the hall. And by-and-by I heard their approaching footsteps, the door was thrown open, and I moved forward to meet them. Could it be the same couple from whom I had so recently parted ? Gladys's eyes were beaming with a strange joy, her cheeks were flushed ; Edmund had a smile once more on his lips, and the shadow had left his brow—my sister clasped me in a passionate embrace.

"Be glad, Mabel," she said, "be glad! We are come from death to life—from disgrace to honour."

I looked at her amazed; then turned to Edmund.

"Yes," he said, "the probation has been a cruel one. But for my angel of a wife, I should have sunk under it; but at last the awful cloud has lifted. There is no mark of Cain upon my brow."

"What can you mean?" I gasped.

"Dear," said my Gladys, "we will tell you all, by-and-by; but it is a long story. We must rest and have tea before you hear it. We have to see our *employés* and the poor children first you know."

Thus my curiosity remained for a time unsatisfied. But, by-and-by, in the soft twilight, Gladys, seated on the little sofa which I had drawn to the window, her husband beside her, holding her hand, said:

"The beginning of the story of my life, Mabel, dates from that summer day when John Clifford found me in Compton Place insensible. But I took a solemn oath then never to repeat what I saw and heard there; therefore I cannot even now tell you what it was, but Edmund will, commencing, in justice to himself, with his own boyhood."

"Yes," said Edmund, passing his arm round Gladys, "and you will see how this noble woman has saved me from despair and deterioration."

And then, while the summer breeze sighed softly over the woods in at the window, and the faint chirp of birds stole in on it, Edmund Lovel told me the following singular story.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY UNRAVELLED.

"My early boyhood was passed in Italy, where my father (who was an artist) had settled, and married a beautiful and well-born but dowerless Italian girl. We had a charming villa near Castellamare, and I was as happy as sunshine and tender mother's love could make me. My mother's nurse, Teresa, was my nurse also, and having lain in her arms from my cradle, I was not terrified at her strangely distorted face, which had been disfigured by an act of self-devotion on her part in saving my mother, when she was an infant, from a fire; Teresa had been dreadfully burnt, especially about her face, the upper lip being actually destroyed and the brow dreadfully scarred.

"Teresa was devoted to both her nurslings, and spoilt me as much as my mother would allow.

"When I was about ten years old, my father took me to England to place me at school, for he believed that I might ultimately be the heir to the Croft; but before he left me with my schoolmaster, who had been a former tutor of his own, he took me to see Mr. Lovel-Compton, my uncle. I remember distinctly how coldly and even discourteously he received us. He was a stern looking man, much older than my father. He had been left the Compton property by an old friend of his father's, on condition that he married the testator's daughter and took the additional name of Compton. The young lady was deficient in intellect, although gifted with great prettiness. The marriage with her had, consequently, struck my father as horrible, and he had urged my uncle not to

accept the property on such terms. But William laughed at him. He loved money, and he had no objection, he said, to a silly wife as pretty as Miss Compton: many men married fools. The match was made, and a son was born to my uncle; immediately afterwards the poor mother wholly lost her reason and ultimately was obliged to be placed in an asylum. The child was an idiot, and Mr. Lovel-Compton found himself bound for life, as it proved, to a mad wife, whilst his only child and heir proved to be equally repulsive in his ways and appearance.

"It was a sad story of greed punished. I think that Uncle William never cared to see my father and mother or me, because he felt the contrast between their lives and his own too keenly.

"Two years after my entering the school, my dear father died, leaving my mother very badly off. She came to England and took lodgings in a village near the school (she and Teresa), but she did not remove me from Mr. Blake's, though it was a very expensive establishment. She wished me to be well educated, and she made every possible personal sacrifice that I might be. She was the best and most devoted of mothers, and I adored her.

"When she was first left a widow, she wrote to my Uncle William, explaining her circumstances, and asking for his assistance in educating and providing for his nephew. But she received a cold, almost rude reply, in which my uncle told her that he could do nothing for her. His brother had been well off, and that if he had lost his money by foolish speculations, it was not his (Mr. Compton's) place to make it good to his widow. The truth was that my uncle had become a confirmed miser, and knew no other pleasure than hoarding. He could scarcely be induced to provide properly for his unhappy son.

"When I was about eighteen I left school, to find my dear mother a confirmed invalid, and her means greatly reduced. She had spent much of her small capital on me, and was no longer able to conceal her poverty from me.

"Teresa had left her.

"'Her only fault,' said my mother, 'was love of money, and since I have been unable to pay her the same wages she has always had she has been extremely discontented. I believe she would have left me a year ago if she could have got a place, but her poor face frightens people. However, she has at last succeeded—and where do you think she is living?'

"I cannot guess."

"'With your Uncle William,' she answered, 'as nurse or rather attendant on your poor cousin. Your uncle wrote to me for her character. It appears that he has difficulty in getting an attendant to remain with his son, and he says he cannot afford!—actually!—to place the lad in an asylum. It is monstrous with his money! But Teresa is content with wages which, though large to her, are not sufficient to bribe an English servant, and in return your uncle does not care for her appearance.'

"I felt a little indignant at Teresa's forsaking my mother; but perhaps she had done better for her mistress by leaving her, as it reduced the latter's expenses. But I could not live idle on our small means, and my mother could not put me into a profession. I resolved, therefore, to get

an ushership in a school, and to study at the same time for some of the Indian competitive examinations. My former tutor offered me a place in his establishment, and I gladly accepted it. The school was in your own post town, Mabel, and I have often seen you and little Gladys driving in its streets, though you, of course, never noticed the poor lad who was walking with his pupils. I was struck by your beauty, however, and by Gladys's even then. The school was not far from Compton Place, in the grounds of which I sometimes wandered.

"Teresa frequently got a holiday and came to see my mother; and I occasionally met her at our home, for my mother had come to reside near me, in lodgings. Teresa on these occasions was vehement in her regrets that we should be so poor, while all the great wealth and grandeur of the Croft should belong to a miser and an idiot.

"What will that poor gibbering creature do by and by with his fine place and his money?" she asked, dramatically waving her hand. "His only idea is to hide gold when he gets any, while Signor Edmund is as generous as the saints themselves. Yet he, a splendid gentleman, is obliged to drudge for a pittance while his cousin has all."

"Perhaps she spoke some of the evil thoughts which had tempted me, for I said, though without any *arrière-pensée*,

"It is a pity he doesn't die, certainly; he can do no good in the world, and I could. I should not order things thus if I were Fate."

"You wish him dead?" she asked eagerly.

"No, no," cried my mother, "he does not mean what he says."

Teresa said no more on the subject.

"And now, Mabel, I am coming to the mystery of Compton Place.

"About a month after that fatal visit of Teresa's, we saw the announcement in the newspaper of my cousin's death. The suddenness of it, and its so swiftly following my wish, startled me, but I did not actually imagine that my words had had any connection with the event; and I was surprised at receiving one day at the school a letter from Teresa, begging me to meet her the next day—a half-holiday—at Compton Place. 'I have a key of the old house,' she wrote, 'and I have something to tell you which no ears must hear but your own.' I was surprised and a little alarmed by this strange request, but I could not refuse to comply with it, and with mingled anxiety and curiosity I hurried at the appointed hour to the old house.

"But Teresa was before her time, and growing weary of waiting in the dwelling, or fearing the ghosts she believed haunted it, she went out into the grounds, leaving the hall door open, and the key in it, while she hurried to meet me across the meadows.

"Thus the door was found open by little Gladys, who ran in, and, child like, eagerly explored the rooms. She went upstairs to the long since denuded picture gallery, and from it into a boudoir, called long ago 'The Tapestry Room.' While here she heard footsteps approaching, and the following words spoken in Italian, which she understood and spoke.

"No one but yourself must hear what I have to say; it is a secret, fatal and deadly."

"The child, terrified, peeped through the opening

of the door, which was ajar, and seeing the awful face of my companion, and listening to her deep tones, was dreadfully frightened and turned to escape, but there was no way out of the boudoir but by the gallery down which we were coming. She glanced round her for a hiding-place; saw a rent in the tapestry, peeped in, and found that it hung loosely from the wall. The next moment she had crept inside it.

"Teresa entered the room first and I followed her; and then, believing that we were beyond mortal hearing, she told me that my cousin had died by her hand—she had poisoned him!

"I knew you wished it," she said, "and your faithful Teresa would willingly give her life for her dear boy."

"I listened at first in silent horror, then I burst out into indignant denial of having ever even thought of murder. I told her that I looked on her with aversion, with horror, and at first she was cowed. Then suddenly she became furious.

"I have perilled my soul for you!" she thundered. "I have been your hand to fulfil your spoken wishes, and now you disavow me! But you shall not—you shall not! Coward as you are! I will confess—I will denounce you. I will tell how I acted on your suggestion and was then condemned by you. Who would not believe me? What motive had I to kill the lad in whose service I earned my bread? What but to please you?"

"Mabel, I ought not to have heeded her threats; I ought to have given her up to justice; but I was very young—and alas! morally timid. Such a confession as she threatened would kill my delicate mother, who had been startled at my thoughtless words; moreover, she might be believed in preference to me. In fact, she had acted on my spoken wishes and for my sake. Besides she had been a second mother to my infancy.

"I tried to soothe her; I explained that I knew she had acted for my sake, but that I regretted it deeply. I had never intended to incite her to crime. Even as I was speaking something fell down behind the arras. It might have been pieces of the plaster shaken down by the trembling girl concealed behind the tapestry.

"Teresa turned swiftly at the sound.

"A rat," I said.

"But she darted forward, pulled the arras down, discovered, and instantly dragged out, the unfortunate listener.

"So!" she hissed out. "Thou hast heard! thou hast heard! but thou shalt never tell."

"And in an instant a knife flashed in her hand. I sprang forward and caught her wrist.

"Stay!" I cried; "what would you do? This child has probably not understood a word of what you have said! Do you understand Italian?" I asked Gladys.

"A denial that she did would have insured her safety, but in face of apparent death she would not lie.

"Yes," she said faintly.

"Again Teresa struggled to get her hand free; but I held her back.

"Listen," I said sternly, "you shall not touch this child. If you do I swear to denounce you as a murderer, and never to see your face again. The child shall swear not to betray you; one so truthful will never break an oath. Give me your knife."

"Muttering maledictions, she gave it up; and I turned to Gladys.

"'You have heard,' I said, 'will you swear?'

"And she did, repeating an oath after Teresa. Then I raised her from her knees, and said 'Go.'

"She fled away with great swiftness, and (as she tells me) fell insensible in the hall.

"The terror had been too much for her.

"Teresa and I hurried away by the back entrance, fearing that we might meet other unexpected visitors in the hall; the old woman first ascertaining that the tapestry concealed no other listener.

"On our way, she told me that she had poisoned my cousin so craftily that the doctor had thought it a case of English cholera, and had certified to that effect; that little inquiry had been made, in fact, about his death, as Mr. Compton himself was very ill. This last statement alarmed me so much—in dread of another crime—that I insisted on Teresa's at once returning to my mother, promising to pay her well if she did; and threatening to refuse to take the Croft (if it should be left to me) if she did not. The latter threat effected my object, and my uncle assuredly died a natural death six months afterwards.

"By his will I inherited the Croft and all his property. My mother lived for only a year after I had brought her back to her native land; and she never knew Teresa's hateful secret. That it might be kept from her, however, I had to fee the old creature heavily.

"Then, a little more than three years afterwards, I met your father and was brought once more face to face with Gladys.

"She did not recognize in the young man, well dressed and fully grown, the miserable boy she had seen at Compton Place under such terrible circumstances; but the fear that she might do so, if she heard any allusion to my succession, caused me to faint suddenly the day I first dined with you, and your father mentioned my cousin. My crime, in accepting the fruit of a crime, then first struck me—as Gladys would see it—and overpowered me.

"Now, little wife, it is your turn to enlighten Mabel."

"I never even suspected that my Edmund was the poor boy—white, shabby, horror stricken—that I had seen at Compton Place," said my sister; "I never knew it, till the day you left me at San Benito, and Teresa again stood before me. I scarcely know what she said to me, I was so awfully frightened and astounded; for, as a flash of lightning, the truth darted into my mind that Edmund was that boy, and that we had inherited our wealth by murder. I never before comprehended how swift thought is! But I recollect that she jeered me; told me that my husband had done wisely in marrying the only witness against them they had to fear, and telling me that she understood now why he had grown 'mean' to her. It was all a confusion though, and when I bade her, with scorn and loathing, 'Go,' she cursed me frightfully, Mabel. Then I screamed for help—the rest you know."

"She does not know," said Edmund, "how nobly my wife acted under the circumstances. How tenderly she pitied me, how she tried to excuse me, how she forgave me for concealing our former meeting! But she was firm on one point: 'We must not enjoy wealth gained by crime; we must endeavour to atone for my cousin's

murder.' But how could it be done? We could not tell the dreadful story, and give up Teresa to the law. 'She had acted on a mistake, and in her ignorance of right and wrong,' Gladys said. Nor could we, without raising wonder and suspicion, give up my cousin's inheritance. She suggested that we should adopt a monastic life, and spend poor Ulric's money wholly on charity, and for religion. For his sake, lads, suffering as he had, were to be the objects of our care. We have carried out our resolution, Mabel; not without suffering on both sides. We have not spent a penny of Ulric's money since we came to England, but have lived on Gladys's income; the money my mother left, Teresa has had—a hundred a year. We placed her in a cottage a few miles from this place, and have visited her four times a year; Gladys using her best efforts to bring her to repentance—and she has succeeded. But it was not a murder Teresa had to confess—it was a LIE! On her death-bed she acknowledged to us that Ulric Compton had really died of English cholera; she had never given him anything injurious; but after his death she had craftily imagined that if she deceived me, and pretended to have committed such a crime at my suggestion, she would have a claim on me that would make her rich—and she loved money best of all things. Gladys had taught her much, and she was really penitent her priest told us. And, Mabel, now we are free! We no longer feel as if we were the connivers at a crime. We are released at last."

I embraced them both, and congratulated them, with happy tears.

The joy of their lives had come back. The clouds had rolled away.

They no longer lived as ascetics, but putting proper people into the Croft to take care of the idiots—for no good work was to be given up—they moved to Compton Place, which was restored and renovated, and was to become their future home.

I returned to my father's house, and was married from it, in the autumn of that year, to my first love. I have now been his happy wife for six years, and we have endeavoured to make the time fruitful in good deeds. I do not think we have wholly failed.

Last year, John received the gift of the living of Woodlands from my brother-in-law, on the death of the dear old rector, and Gladys and I are once more united. Edmund placed the Dower House at my father's disposal, and he inhabits it, till the lease of his own dwelling falls in; thus we are altogether.

Merry children of my own and Gladys's run now in the well-kept grounds of Compton Place, and play hide-and-seek in the old house, where she once hid at peril of her life.

We are all as happy as mortals can be; the happier perhaps for the probation Gladys passed through—that sad time following the mystery of Compton Place.

CHURCH ALES.

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.H.S.

IN the days of yore our forefathers had merry meetings called "Church Ales," or "Whitsun Ales," which were generally held under the shadow of the church. Some weeks prior to the festival the churchwardens brewed a large quantity of strong ale. On the day appointed for holding the Church Ale, not only did the inhabitants of the place where it was held muster in full force, but people from the surrounding villages came in large numbers to show their good-will and spend money in ale to swell the receipts of the meeting. Rich and poor gathered together, the village squire and his lady, in some instances accompanied by his jester in cap and bells, took part in the proceedings. The villagers came well provided with choice viands for their own consumption, and to offer to a friend or to give to a needy neighbour, for in the good old times charity was freely exercised. Music and song always formed an important feature in the festival. A preacher named William Kethe, in the year of grace 1570, denounced the old usage, and from his sermon preached at Blandford, we obtain some facts about the manner of spending the holiday, which was generally on a Sunday. The following are named as the Sunday Church Ale sports of the period:—bull-baiting, bear-baiting, bowls, dice and card playing, dancing and other diversions, as well as singing songs. Students of Shakespeare will remember that the dramatist in *Pericles* thus adverted to a song:—

It hath been sung at festivals,
On Ember eves, and *holy ales*.

The Morris dance was also a great attraction, and is alluded to in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. The Dauphin says:—

I say 'tis meet we all go forth
To view the sick and feeble parts of France,
And let us do it with no show of fear;
No, with no more than if we heard that England
Were busied with a Whitsun Morris dance.

The old churchwarden's accounts contained many curious items referring to this subject. In Coates's "History of Reading" are reproduced numerous quaint entries from the parish books. The St. Mary's accounts record: "1557 payed to the Morrys Daunsters and the Mynstrels mete and drink at Whystontide ijs. iiijd." The books of St. Laurence for the year 1504 state, "Payed for bread and ale spent to use of the church at Whitsontyd ijs. vjd. Item for wyne at the same tyme xiiij." Several other amounts similar to the foregoing are entered in the old accounts at Reading. At a vestry meeting held at Brentford in 1621 several articles were agreed upon with regard to the parish stock by the chapel-wardens. According to Brand's "Popular Antiquities" the preamble stated "that the inhabitants had for many years been accustomed to have meetings at Whitsuntide, in their church-board and other places there in friendly manner, to eat and drink together, and liberally spend their monies, to the end neighbourly society might be maintained, and also a common stock raised for the repairs of the church,

maintaining orphans, placing poor children in service, and defraying other charges." The gains of the Church Ale in 1624 amounted to £22 2s. 9d. and were made up as follows:—Made by pigeon-holes £4 19s. This was a game similar to our modern bagatelle. The profits of hocking are put down at £7 3s. 7d. Hocking or hock is an old game at cards. By "rifeling" £2 was realized. Rifeling may be read as raffling which comes down to our day in connection with bazaars. Lastly, the sum of £8 0s. 2d. was cleared by victualling. In 1618 the accounts of the same parish state "Gained with hocking at Whitsuntide £16 12s. 3d." The game is mentioned in the parish books almost every year down to 1640 when it appears to have been given up. At Kingston-upon-Thames the profits of the Church Ale in 1526 are set down at £7 15s., an amount equal to nearly £100 of money at the present time. Our ancestors not only wanted strong beer, but a plentiful supply of it. We find it stated on good authority that at the banquet given in 1464 at the installation of George Neville, Archbishop of York, 300 tuns of ale, and 100 tuns of wine were consumed. In the household of his predecessor 80-tuns of claret were said to have been drunk every year. For a long period Church Ales formed an important feature in English life, but in course of time they were discontinued. As education spread, a higher standard of enjoyment was raised, the coarse sports of the olden days ceased to prove attractive, and other means of obtaining money to carry on the work of the church were instituted.

THE MAIDEN'S TRYST.

(From the Swedish of Runenberg.)

BY BARONESS SWIFT.

FROM stolen tryst a maid once homewards sped;
Red were her hands, whereat her mother said:
"Why are thy hands so red, child—tell me why?"
Then quoth the maid: "Down in yon flower-bed
I pricked my fingers on a rose-bush high."

Again from stolen tryst she homewards sped;
Red were her lips, whereat her mother said:
"Why are thy lips so red, child—tell me why?"
Then quoth the maid: "Down in yon garden-bed
I stained my lips with berries' purple dye."

Once more from stolen tryst she homewards sped;
Pale were her cheeks, whereat her mother said:
"Why are thy cheeks so pale, child—tell me why?"
Then quoth the maid: "Dear mother, for my bed
Dig thou a grave wherein my corse may lie,
And on its cross inscribe these words, I pray :
'With fingers red she homewards sped one day—
They in her lover's hands thus rosy grew;
With ruddy lips she home returned next day—
They on her lover's mouth thus crimson grew;
With pallid cheeks she then did homewards go—
They at her lover's scorn thus pale did grow!'"

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LONDON: AUGUST 22, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MAJOR BOMBASINE'S PROPOSAL.

BY HORACE VICKARS-MEES,

Author of "At the Sign of the 'Silver Bells,'" &c.

CHAPTER I.
THE ADVANCE.

THE major was short, stout, middle-aged and apoplectic. The major's friends were wont to declare that within the period of their recollection that redoubtable warrior had always presented the same appearance, which was, in a roundabout way, asserting more upon the delicate point of the major's age than that gentleman would have felt called upon to give voice to himself; and it was furthermore a matter of opinion amongst the same uncharitable body that the gallant warrior would continue to wear the same external aspect to the end of the chapter, which was a tortuous mode of saying that the major, of all men, could be thoroughly trusted to look after the personal comfort and the real or artificial preservation of number one.

The major had a grievance, like many other estimable members of his profession, but being wise in his generation, he did not waste his time in inditing alternate memorials to the Horse Guards and the War Office, but contented himself with drawing his half-pay and relieving himself in private life, and at a safe distance from the possibility of repetition, of sundry fulminations against "a parcel of noodles, sir," who sorely vexed his fiery soul.

Another weakness of the major, and one that he developed to an alarming extent under the genial influence of his third or fourth glass of toddy, was a settled conviction that the degeneracy of the British army had, by a remarkable coincidence, developed alarming proportions since the date of his retirement. Major Bombazine did not go so

far as to say in actual words that this remarkable circumstance was anything more than a curious coincidence, but he nevertheless left it to his hearers to draw their own inferences from the fact that his "loss had been deeply felt, sir; I may say, as a kind of national calamity, my friend."

It was afternoon, and Major Bombazine had just stepped upstairs from his comfortable apartments on the ground-floor of No. 50 De Beauvoir Street, Bloomsbury, to pay his daily visit to the drawing-room lodger.

The major, in accordance with his usual custom, had requested the handmaid-in-chief at No. 50 to step up to Mrs. Lovejoy, the lodger in question, with his compliments and the information that he was "about to pay his respects, if at home."

The formula was more polite than grammatical, but grammar was hardly a strong point with the major, who prided himself upon the fact that he was a "man of war, sir—not of words."

There was, moreover, to the best of Major Bombazine's knowledge, no reference to grammar in the regulations as a requisite in the composition of a "leader of men."

Mrs. Lovejoy was a widow of five or six-and-twenty, possessed of an elegant figure, a charming face, and, if the social gossip of No. 50 De Beauvoir Street was to be believed, a very tolerable competency. The widow's "encumbrances" were of the most nominal description, being entirely concentrated in the person of her little daughter Florence, a child of six.

Now, the major was not a marrying man, he being too sublimely selfish, if the truth must be told; but he had more than once intimated to particular cronies at the Cannon-ball Club of late, that circumstances might arise which would induce him, as he put it, to "exchange into a marching regiment," or, in other words, to become a Benedict.

And it is not to be denied that pretty Mrs. Lovejoy appeared to the major to be a very inviting "circumstance." "She was a dashed fine woman, sir," according to Major Bombazine.

"with a dashed neat foot; and she received her money from those lawyer fellows, Prowler, Snooks, Jenkins, and Jobson, who were dashed big people in Lincoln's Inn Fields."

Altogether, Major Bombazine had turned the matter over in his mind very frequently of late, and he already in imagination saw the pretty widow seated on the opposite side of his chimney-corner discussing like a dutiful, loving wife the desirability of expending her income on a "house in the country, with a decent animal or two, sir," and sundry other luxuries for the major's especial befoof. He had not as yet made a positive declaration of his intentions, but he was "dashed near it," for had he not squeezed her fair hand on Monday, ogled her with sympathetic *tendresse* on Tuesday, and laid his hand with unmistakable meaning on his manly heart on Wednesday? And here was Thursday, and with it the major seated opposite to the lovely widow, determined as to what should happen at this interview.

"How good of you to take compassion on my poor solitary self, major," said Mrs. Lovejoy, with an arch smile.

"My dear madam, it is a pleasure and delight," answered the gallant warrior, as he seated himself with military precision close to Mrs. Lovejoy's work-table. "A pleasure and delight," he repeated, looking up at the ceiling for further inspiration. He appeared to find what he sought, for he presently added, "I may say, my dear Mrs. Lovejoy, in the language of the poet, 'A thing of beauty and a joy for ever!'"

The major's capacity for "elegant extracts" was as weak as his grammar; he had a habit of bringing in his quotations, which were invariably incorrect, in a singularly inconsequent fashion, but he made up in complacency what he lacked in appositeness.

"Oh, major, I'm sadly afraid you're a gay flatterer," said the pretty widow, with the faintest indication of a blush.

"My dear madam, you do me an injustice," cried the gay flatterer. "The poet's thought but feebly expresses my—my profound—shall I say esteem, my dear Mrs. Lovejoy?"

"By all means, major," returned Mrs. Lovejoy, demurely; "by all means say esteem."

"Perhaps I may venture to use a warmer expression?" said the emboldened warrior.

"Well, that depends—if it is sincere," answered the lady.

"No, madam, it isn't sincere," blurted the major; "it's love and affec—"

"Hush, hush, major!" cried the widow, putting up her hands with an affectation of horror; "I didn't mean that, you know. Oh, the idea! I couldn't really, you know."

But the major undauntedly continued the attack. "I fear, my dearest madam," he said, infusing as much gallantry into his ardent gaze as he could contrive to muster; "I fear that you are cruel to your humble adorer; and yet I hope with the immortal Byron, that 'the quality of mercy is not strangled' in your fair bosom, and that you will take pity on the manifest emotion of your humble servant." And the major drew himself up in his chair, and did his level best to look the picture of animated emotion.

The major's love-making was a very fair effort in the style that found favour with our fore-

fathers, but the lively young widow had experienced something a little more modern, and was in consequence more amused than impressed by Major Bombazine's efforts; but she listened with demureness, and the gallant soldier's bosom swelled with hopes of victory.

"Major, you wicked man," said Emily Lovejoy with great seriousness, and pausing in her work to look at him, "I positively believe that you are making love to me!"

"Love, my angel!" cried the major, now warmed to a state of indescribable fervour, "in the words of some immortal fellow or other, 'I do make much love, methinks!'"

It is to be feared that the major was his own poet on this occasion, to judge from the literary quality of the effort.

"But you mustn't, major—you really mustn't, you know. It's positively shocking," said Emily Lovejoy.

"Why, my dear madam?" returned the impassioned major. "Is not the heart of man made to—to-beat and tremble at the sight of lovely woo—man? Is not the heart of man made to yearn at the sight of youth and bee—uty? I say, yes, madam, and I say too that the heart and hand of your humble adorer"—here the major made a rapid dash at the pretty widow's hand, but only succeeded in pricking himself with the needle that it held—"Jehoshaphat! I mean—or—confound that needle! I mean, the heart and hand of your humble adorer, Nathaniel Bombazine, I now lay—"

"Hush, major, hush! There's some one coming, I'm sure," cried Emily, suppressing her mirth. "Do get up, there's a good man."

For the major had cast himself on one knee beside the fair object of his affection, and had resigned himself to carrying out the destiny which fate ordained.

"Some one coming!" he now ejaculated. "The deuce!" And with much labour and travail the major rose from his knees and gained his seat just in time to hear his fair adored, after composing her laughing features, saying, "Come in!" in response to a knock at the door.

CHAPTER II.

THE MANGUVERIES OF THE RESIDED.

"I THOUGHT it was this confounded piano fellow!" growled the major inwardly, as he caught sight of Mr. Thompson Phipps, Mus. Bac., the third-floor lodger of No. 50 De Beauvoir Street. "What business has this dashed organ-grinder to come in and interrupt me at this important juncture?" And Major Bombazine glared fiercely at Mr. Phipps, while that gentleman nervously shook hands with Mrs. Lovejoy, and expressed a hope that Major Bombazine was in good health.

"Yes, sir," snarled the major, "I am happy to say that I am in the best of health. As his lordship the general remarked to me on the sanguinary plain of Rumjungle, when I knocked the life out of three niggers with the butt-end of my revolver and pitched a fourth head foremost over my shoulder, 'Bombazine, you're a dashed marvel.' Fact, sir, his lordship the general called me aside

and made that flattering remark on the blood-stained field of Rumjungle."

"Bless me," said Mr. Phipps in a tone of voice which might have meant astonishment, admiration, perfect credence, or utter disbelief, just as his listener chose to interpret it.

"I am rather late, Mrs. Lovejoy, for your lesson," said Mr. Phipps apologetically, "but I was detained at a pupil's house. I hope I haven't inconvenienced you?"

"Oh no, Mr. Phipps, not in the least," said Mrs. Lovejoy. "The major has been kind enough to afford me a little—er—distraction. Shall we say distraction, major?" she added with an arch glance at the gallant warrior.

"I have had that honour, Mr. Phipps," said the major starchy; "the extreme honour, I may say."

Mr. Phipps was happy to hear it, in his modest nervous way, and hoped that he hadn't interrupted an interesting conversation, because, if so, he would postpone the lesson and retire until a more convenient opportunity.

The major in his own mind devoutly wished that he would, but Mrs. Lovejoy would not hear of it, and insisted upon both gentlemen remaining to drink tea with her, after which Mr. Phipps should give her the music lesson and "the major should listen."

The major, who hated music, was not particularly delighted with his part of the programme, but he accepted it with good grace, remarking incidentally the fact that the immortal what's-his-name had once observed that "music hath *pangs* to suit each savage breast!" The major did not explain which particular "pang" accorded best with his manly bosom, but he pulled himself up, and rather flattered himself that he had "taken it out" of Phipps a bit with that last quotation, particularly when he observed the blank look of astonishment that covered that worthy musician's face when he heard the major's reading of the time-honoured line.

The prevailing characteristic of Mr. Thompson Phipps was his intense shyness. He was a very presentable man of thirty, or thereabouts, and maintained himself in tolerable comfort in the third floor of the roomy Bloomsbury house by means of his stipend as organist of the ritualistic church round the corner, and a goodly string of private pupils. He was a capable musician, and Mrs. Lovejoy, for want of something to occupy her idle hours, was improving her school-girl acquaintance with the divine art under the supervision of Mr. Thompson Phipps, much to the major's disgust in the first instance, for that gallant gentleman saw in Mr. Phipps a possible rival for the "country house with a decent animal or two," until he discovered that Thompson Phipps, to quote Major Bombazine's conclusion, "was a fellow who couldn't say boo to a goose," and who was certainly unequal to the task of supplanting the major in the fair widow's tender consideration.

The tea was served and drunk, the major between whiles glaring fiercely at Mr. Phipps in a way which suggested that he contemplated demolishing that unhappy musician when the toast was done with, while Mrs. Lovejoy mischievously showered overwhelming attentions and captivating glances upon the unfortunate Phipps,

much to that nervous gentleman's embarrassment and the major's disgust; so that between Major Bombazine's ferocity and Mrs. Lovejoy's blandishments, Thompson Phipps had a tolerably excruciating time of it.

It was evident that Mrs. Lovejoy was bent upon exciting the major's jealousy by her attentions to Mr. Phipps, and when the redoubtable warrior was planted in an arm-chair away in a corner, with permission to smoke a cheroot while she and her master were busy at the piano, it was difficult to say which fumed the most, the major or his cigar.

For she begged "her dear Mr. Phipps" to show her this passage, which necessitated his leaning over the back of her chair; or she wanted her "good Mr. Phipps" to guide her fingers through this difficult cadenza, which rendered it imperative for Mr. Phipps to take her hand in his own trembling fingers, and Mrs. Lovejoy noticed that they did tremble; and her "charming Mr. Phipps" had to turn over the leaves for her, which action brought their heads into close contact; and finally, Mrs. Lovejoy found it necessary to look into the depths of Thompson Phipps's mild blue eyes, seize his hands, and avow in a burst of overdone ecstasy that her "dear Mr. Phipps" was the most delightful master she had ever had—really!

It can be readily imagined that Thompson Phipps, undergoing this pleasureable ordeal, was not quite certain whether he was standing on his head or his heels, and as for Major Bombazine, words can but faintly express his state of mind. He gurgled, he gasped, he sat erect, he glared, he snorted; in fact, he did everything that could be imagined, without attracting the slightest attention from the culprits; and finally, human nature could put up with such glaring heartlessness no longer, so the major stood up erect, buttoned his coat around him, murmured something concerning an appointment, and took himself off in high dudgeon, without even shaking hands.

His ponderous tread reverberated on the staircase, and Emily Lovejoy indulged in a burst of merry laughter.

"What a droll creature the major is!" said the widow when she had recovered.

"Er—er—very," said Thompson Phipps dubiously.

"Do you know, Mr. Phipps—no, you will never guess. What do you think happened this afternoon?" said Emily, with another burst of merriment.

"Bless me, I—I really can't think, Mrs. Lovejoy," said Thompson Phipps, considerably mystified.

"Why, the major actually proposed to me," she said, looking Mr. Phipps straight in the face.

Mr. Phipps's beaming countenance fell with a great suddenness, much to Mrs. Lovejoy's satisfaction.

"Bless me, did he really?" at length said Mr. Phipps in a lugubrious tone of voice.

"Yes, he did, actually. Don't you think it's a great chance for me, my dear Mr. Phipps?" said Emily with a gay twinkle of her merry eye.

"Well—well—I really don't know," returned poor Thompson Phipps, apparently much embarrassed at being made a confidant of, for he continually cast his eyes down, and would not meet the laughing widow's glance.

"The major is—is peculiar," he stammered forth at length. "Very peculiar, my dear Mrs. Lovejoy."

"Yes, he certainly is," said Emily, with considerate dryness.

"And—and did you accept him?" inquired Thompson Phipps, astonished at his own boldness the moment he had uttered the inquiry.

"Not yet," replied the pretty widow; "but there is no knowing what may happen."

She was very cruel to him, and appeared to be getting as much amusement out of the timid music-master as she had extracted from the bold major.

"But I suppose I—I shall shortly have to congratulate you and—and the major," pursued Mr. Phipps in hopeless despondency, his eyes only raised for one brief moment to Emily Lovejoy's face.

She looked at him steadily for half a minute. Thompson Phipps's interesting face was suffused with a deep blush. Mr. Phipps was not so painfully and needlessly sensitive before any other of his lady pupils, and having recently acquainted his modest self with this fact, Mr. Thompson Phipps's mind had been painfully disturbed.

"Bless me!" he had said seriously to himself, "I must be head over heels in love with her! Well, she is a dear, good woman, and deserves the love of the best man breathing. And I'm not the best man by a long way. No, Thompson, no such luck. There's the major, you know, a fine, soldierly man. And I've heard that the ladies always have a partiality for fine, soldierly men." And Mr. Phipps had conceived a mortal hatred in his usually placid breast for all "fine, soldierly men" forthwith.

And now Emily Lovejoy was looking at him fixedly, and Thompson Phipps, poor guilty wretch, was blushing visibly.

"Thompson Phipps," she said at length, not relaxing her steady gaze; "Thompson Phipps, you're a humbug!"

Poor Phipps was completely demolished by this sudden uncomplimentary outburst. He forgot his bashfulness and looked up in sheer amazement.

"Oh, Mrs. Lovejoy," he murmured helplessly; "I hope not, indeed. Why do you——"

"Why do I tell you that you're a humbug?" said Emily with the least smile. "Because you haven't the sense to look a woman in the face and tell her what is on your mind!"

Thompson Phipps was hopelessly bewildered. He could only twitch his watch-chain, rub his hair, and nervously finger his chin. If he could only sink through floor and ceiling—but then there was the major below, and he was almost as bad as the lady.

Mrs. Lovejoy suddenly took Thompson Phipps's hands in her little palms. Despite her ease and gaiety she was getting a little nervous herself, and the two pairs of hands were both trembling now, even locked in each other's clasp. He was certainly a terribly backward man even for a widow to deal with, but she screwed her courage up.

"Thompson Phipps," she said, looking at him very bravely, "are you going to propose to me, or must I propose to you?"

Happy Thompson! The heavens were at his

feet, but he could not realize the fact yet. I really cannot pretend to say what was the state of Thompson Phipps's mind at this startling inquiry of his adored. He simply bowed his head before her and—well, he kissed the little hands that held his. And after such temerity he felt unable to raise his head again, so he went on kissing until Emily started up from her seat at the piano, and walked to the fireplace.

Poor Thompson thought the kissing had offended her, so he remained in his chair by the piano. He had not at all made up his mind that she was not quizzing him even now.

"Come here, sir," she presently said imperiously, but she was half turned from him and gazing into the fire.

He rose and advanced sheepishly—no, I should hardly say that, for Thompson was never sheepish—he was timid, in a gentle and rather charming way, charming because it sprang from his modesty, the which, being absolutely the rarest virtue discoverable in man, is all the more refreshing when perceptible.

Thompson could not but perceive how handsome she looked in her tall, rich fulness as he approached her. "This lovely creature mean what she said to him, Thompson Phipps, a poor devil of a music-grubber! No, it was too ridiculous."

"You have not answered my question," she said, still gazing into the fire when he reached her.

"No. I fear it was too much happiness—for me—to be true," he said simply.

She turned to him at this, and looked at him.

"Then you do—do care for me a little?" she said in a low tone.

He screwed up his courage, cast his timidity to the winds, took her hand in his, and looked her full in the face.

"I love you with my whole soul," he said in quite a promising tone of voice.

"Then why haven't you told me so before?" she inquired, the arch smile returning.

"Because—because I felt sure you didn't care for me, and would be terribly affronted," pleaded Thompson Phipps.

"Hum! I don't know that I do care for you one bit," returned Emily with a pout. "You are a most exasperating man. I believe I shall have to give you a good shaking presently to relieve my feelings. Now, listen to me. If you don't propose to me within forty-eight hours from this moment, I shall positively accept the major! There! Now, you know the ultimatum, and you may go." And she released her hand.

He stood looking at her with a comical expression of uncertainty and inquiry on his quiet face.

"Well, you *may* kiss me, just once, although you don't deserve it," she said demurely. But as a matter of fact she had to kiss the foolish fellow herself first, and then he kissed her.

Poor man! his amatory education had been shockingly neglected, for he had only kissed two women in his life, his mother and a school-girl cousin, the latter of whom, when she had arrived at the mature age of seventeen, and had in her own opinion found out "what things were," unmercifully jilted poor Thompson Phipps for being such an utter fool.

But extremes meet, more perhaps in matrimony

than in any other situation under the sun, and the gay young widow, resolute and self-confident, had fallen considerably in love with the quiet musician, particularly when she had discovered, with that mysterious prescience of women, how considerably Thompson Phipps was in love with her.

"There, you are a dear, good man," she said, holding his hands once more and looking into his blue eyes; "and if you promise to obey me in everything, I believe I shall make something of you yet. Now you must go. You have only forty-eight hours to make up your mind, remember," she added with a merry laugh.

"Good-night, Thompson."

"Good-night, dear Emily."

And Thompson Phipps went up to the third floor, the happiest man in England, to ruminant on his wonderful good fortune. And Emily, with a pleased smile, looked into the dying fire.

A little too daringly forward, perhaps, you think, my dear reader? But you must allow that he was a shockingly provoking man, and—well, she was a widow, you see.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEPART.

MAJOR BOMBAZINE sat in solitary state at a plentiful breakfast with a composed look of satisfaction and triumph on his manly features. For an evening at the Cannon Ball, with a quiet rubber of whist and several composing draughts of some mysterious concoction known to the major as "Polly-and-Scotch," had restored the equanimity and self-confidence which had been momentarily disturbed by the glaring attentions showered upon that "dashed organ-grinder" by the gay widow.

The following day the major had renewed the attack with such ardour that the besieged party had pleaded for a truce until the next morning, and the major felt confident that the besieged would now surrender unconditionally; hence his jubilance.

The gallant warrior had lighted his cheroot, settled himself comfortably in an arm-chair to renew his pleasant visions of the "country-house and the decent animal or two," now almost life-size under the enlarging influence of the major's sanguine mind, when happening to put his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat in search of a cigar-case, he drew forth a letter.

"Ah, dash it! I'd forgotten this," said the major as he carelessly glanced at the envelope. "The dear creature must have dropped it last night somehow."

The major had returned from the club rather late the previous night, and after letting himself in noiselessly and lighting his candle at the hall table, his eye had caught sight of a white envelope lying just outside his room door.

He picked it up with a passing imprecation on the "dashed carelessness" of Mary Jane in the matter of his correspondence, when he discovered that it was an opened letter addressed to Mrs. Lovejoy. That lady had evidently dropped it in the hall, and the major put it into his pocket and went to bed, intending to restore it to the

widow on the morrow; and this was the letter that he had now inadvertently produced from his pocket. He looked at it carelessly, and noticed that the superscription was written in a stiff, formal hand, and on turning the envelope over, he found that it bore the initials "P. S. J. & J."

"P. S. J. & J." ruminated Major Bombazine. "Why, that must be Prowler, Snooks, Jenkins, and Jobson, her lawyers. I thought it looked something of that kind. Wonder what it's about?" And the major turned it over again.

There was a certain portion of the instincts of a gentleman remaining to the major despite his egregious selfishness, and he hesitated considerably before he ventured to draw the enclosure out and master its contents. But the possibility of improving his knowledge of Mrs. Lovejoy's pecuniary position was a temptation too great for the major's feeble scruples to combat successfully; so, after a little cogitation, he drew the letter out, and scanned its contents with nervous haste.

"Dash my buttons!" screamed the major, after the first hasty perusal, and the open letter dropped from his hands, and his rotund face lengthened to a preternatural extent. He sat transfixed with consternation for a whole minute, and then he picked the letter up and proceeded to read it again with greater carefulness.

It was dated the previous day, and ran as follows:—

"502 Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.

"DEAR MADAM,

"It is our melancholy duty to inform you that we have received a cablegram advising us of the utter collapse of the Great Little Blister Gold Mining Company, in which, despite our earnest advice, you insisted upon investing the greater part of your fortune. We learn that the company is heavily involved, and we fear that a still more serious diminution in your income than that involved by the actual loss of the paid-up capital will result in consequence of the calls upon the shareholders for the unpaid balance on their shares which will doubtless be made in the interests of the creditors, and which in your case we deeply regret to say will involve the selling out of the greater part of the consols and freehold property in which the balance of your fortune is invested.

"We beg to offer you our sincere sympathy in these painful circumstances, and to assure you that our utmost endeavours will be directed to saving as much as possible from the collapse.

"We are

"Yours faithfully,

"PROWLER, SNOOKS, JENKINS & JOBSON.

"Mrs. Lovejoy."

"Well I'm —" but the major sank back in his arm-chair too hopelessly bewildered to finish his ejaculation. "Why, she's ruined!" he gasped when he recovered a little from his state of consternation. "She's ruined! And I have offered her marriage! Here's a pretty mess. Well, if I haven't put my foot into it this time, my name is not Nathaniel Bombazine. Good Lor'! what am I to do?" For the major had rapidly arrived at the conclusion that his pleasant visions of "the country house," &c., had vanished into thin air, and that his contemplated essay in matrimony,

instead of resulting in a multiplication of his income by three or four, was rapidly resolving itself into a question of its division by two.

"I can't get out of it!" screamed the major; and he started up and paced violently about the room. "She's a dashed dangerous woman, and she'll have me up for breach of promise, as sure as I'm a sinner. Law court, reports in those infernal newspapers, 'Breach of Promise Case against a Major,' cross-examination of defendant, roars of laughter, and the confounded damages! Heavens! it's awful!"

The major was rapidly becoming frantic at the prospect.

"I wish I'd never seen the dashed woman," he moaned.

It will be seen that the gallant warrior's exquisite sympathy for himself was all that could be desired; so much so, that his manly bosom could spare none for the unfortunate widow.

"There's that child of hers to keep, too, and the maid. Good heavens! it's unbearable. And the fellows at the Cannon Ball—I shall never hear the last of it from them."

This last apprehension of the major was not wholly illusory, for, if the truth must be told, he had lately eased his mind of various self-laudatory hints to his less fortunate cronies at the club concerning the immense fortune he was going to marry, and the pretty widow who had been so smitten by his charms; he had even gone so far as to issue one or two informal invitations to his particulars to come down to the "country house," that now, alas! had disappeared like a mirage. It was clearly the choicest mess that Major Nathaniel Bombazine had ever got himself into, and how to get out of it he did not know. Marrying the woman was out of the question. The major was too fond of his creature comforts to dream of sharing them with another. He thought of running away, making a clean bolt of it to avoid the certain consequences, for he had rapidly transformed "the dashed neat woman, the charming creature with the decent income," which his enthusiastic selfishness had presented to his mind, into a monster of the most dangerous description, now that she had lost her money. But the Major remembered with a groan that it was a matter of impossibility for him to abjure his old associations and lose himself in the crowd.

"I should become a raving madman," groaned the major. "No, I must face it out, I suppose. Go up and see her and trust to my infernal luck to get me out of it as well as it has got me into it."

So the major rang his bell, and sent Mary Jane upstairs to announce his coming; then he buttoned his frock high up across his manly breast, assumed a look of stern determination as of one who did not intend "to be bamboozled, sir," and sallied forth to meet the enemy, for as such he now regarded the poor widow.

He found the lady seated on a couch with a handkerchief to her eyes, looking the picture of despair.

"I think you have lost something, madam," said the major with ominous stiffness. "I picked this letter up last night."

"Oh, thank you, major. I—I have been looking for it everywhere," sobbed Emily. "It's dreadful, major—dreadful!" And Mrs. Lovejoy commenced weeping afresh.

"Er—er—Indeed, madam," said Major Bombazine, making the most heroic efforts to appear in ignorance.

"But I was forgetting," pursued Mrs. Lovejoy tearfully. "Of course you do not know the contents. The letter has—has upset me so that I—I am quite silly. Pray read it, dear major; read it."

The major had now to read the letter with an appearance of great interest and subsequent consternation and sympathy. But he was a poor actor, and failed lamentably; and the worthy soldier could not but feel instinctively that the widow's eye was upon him round the corner of her pocket handkerchief.

"Wants to see the effect of the news," thought the major. "Deuced 'cute."

"Dear me," said the major, with the air of a heavy father, as he returned the letter to the tearful Emily. "It's aw—aw—very distressing—aw—news. I may say—aw—with the immortal—aw—Tupper, I believe, that 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is in losing all your things.' Dashed queer observation," pursued the major with a faint attempt at jocularity, "but applicable to present circumstances. I suppose it was originally the reflection of some reduced householder after the brokers had gone; but I—aw—really can't speak positively on that point."

But Mrs. Lovejoy did not respond to his cheerfulness.

"Cheer up, my dear madam," pursued the gallant warrior, who was anxious to do the thing as gracefully as circumstances would permit; "there's a silver cloud to every lining—no, dash it, I mean there's a—well it doesn't matter what there is—it may not be so bad as they think."

"Alas, my dearest major, I fear it is worse," responded Emily. "I should have resigned myself to despair but for the remembrance of you, major."

"Of me, madam?" said the bewildered Bombazine.

"Yes, of you, major, and the certainty I felt that this calamity would cause no difference in the chivalrous feelings of your lofty spirit; and now that I have seen you, major"—here the handkerchief went to the eyes again—"now that I have heard from your lips how lightly you treat this news, I am filled with joy. Major Bombazine will never be mercenary, I thought; he at least is sincere in his professions; and now I perceive how correct I was in my judgment, and feel assured that I have not wa—wa—wasted my affections." Here the sobbing recommenced.

"Of course, madam, of course," responded the unhappy major, who began to wish himself well out of this. "Pray, calm yourself, Mrs. Lovejoy; calm yourself, pray. I was about to observe that far from Nathaniel Bombazine being mercenary, he is a man actuated by lofty impulses—I may say, madam, the loftiest impulses. And although in the offer of hand and heart which I had the misfor—I mean the honour to make, money did not enter into the question, yet it would be contrary to the honour of an officer and a gentleman to—to deceive you, my dear madam, as to the altered aspect of affairs. For I must tell you, madam, that Nathaniel Bombazine is poor; I may say, dashed poor, and—"

"Nathaniel, dear Nathaniel!" cried the widow wildly, "do you think that I dare not share poverty with you? Ah! you do not know me."

"Never, madam, never!" cried the major with heroic fortitude. "Do you think that I could deom a lovely woman to such a fate? Never!" And the major really looked as if he were making some self-sacrificing resolution. He was beginning to feel his way through the maze.

"Ah, major! you were ever thoughtful," murmured the fair widow. "But the time has come when I must repay your tender solicitude. For a crust with you, Nathaniel," sobbed Emily Lovejoy, "a crust with you would be heaven itself!"

The major's rising hopes were cast to the ground. The "dashed woman" evidently did not intend to let him off so easily; in fact, she had made up her mind to have him at any price.

"But, hang it, madam, I can't live on a crust," groaned the major in desperation; "deuced glad to get it once at Rumjungle, but I don't want to repeat the experience. No, we must be cautious and wait," he added firmly.

"Wait, major; why should we wait?" sobbed the widow. "Do you regret—"

"N—no, Mrs. Lovejoy, no," said the major, with a groan. "But we can't have this dashed crust business, you know, can we now? Be sensible, and look at it in the face. Do I look like a man who could live on a crust, or any number of crusts, if it comes to that?"

Mrs. Lovejoy inspected the major as he requested, but she offered no opinion.

"We must think about it, and see what's best to be done. Don't you think so, now?" The major's spirits were rising again; he began to see that by temporizing he might sneak himself successfully out of the whole matter.

Emily dried her eyes and looked at the major fixedly.

"Don't you really think so, now?" repeated Major Bombazine, who fancied his specious reasoning was beginning to produce the desired effect.

"If I were to tell you all I think, Major Bombazine," said Emily Lovejoy in an altered voice, which startled the major slightly, "we might have to sit here till Doomsday. What I understand from you is, that in consequence of the altered state of my fortunes you are decidedly averse to doing me the great honour of marrying me?"

"N—n—no, not at all," said the major, abashed by the steady look and the steady voice, and feeling very much like a cur. "Nothing would give me, I may say, greater pleasure. I only want you to look at this dashed crust business in the right light, you know."

"Oblige me by ringing the bell, Major Bombazine," said Emily curtly.

The major did so, wondering vastly what was coming next.

"Ask Mr. Phipps to step down to me," said Emily to Mary Jane when she appeared; and very soon afterwards Thompson Phipps's mild face appeared at the doorway.

Emily Lovejoy's countenance softened as she beckoned him to her side.

"Now, Major Bombazine, I will tell you what I think," said Emily fiercely to the astonished warrior, as she laid her hand on Thompson Phipps's arm. "This gentleman will relieve you of the necessity of going into what you are pleased to call the crust business. He is my affianced husband."

The major looked thunderstruck.

"He has had no experience on the sanguinary plain of Rumjungle or any other such place," she went on remorselessly; "but he is a man of honour, and a gentleman whom I admire and respect. And he is quite prepared to go into the crust business, aren't you, Thompson?" said Emily Lovejoy with a smile.

"Certainly," said Thompson Phipps with commendable promptitude. "Quite prepared to go anywhere with you, my dear."

Two days of courtship under the laughing widow's supervision had worked wonders with the mild musician. He had quite a gay, rollicking air about him.

The major's bewilderment increased.

"Now Thompson," said the terrible widow, again fixing the unhappy major with her angry eye; "you see this gentleman?"

Thompson Phipps believed that he did.

"Well, Thompson," pursued the merciless Emily, "you see the meanest creature in the Queen's dominions!"

"Bless me!" said Thompson Phipps.

"Madam!" gasped the major in a state of fury.

"Yes, sir," said Emily, standing up and confronting him, "the meanest fortune-hunting creature in the Queen's dominions. Thompson, my dear," pursued the irate lady, "as I told you, this man asked me to marry him. He had discovered that I had money, and had made up his mind to have the handling of it. He had the audacity to talk about me at his club (I have friends there as well as Major Bombazine, and have found out all that he has been saying), and he had marked out a pretty programme as to how my money was to be spent in providing him with 'a house in the country, and a decent animal or two!'"

The major began to wish he had never been born.

"I was curious to see to what lower depths of meanness and baseness this man could descend," pursued the revengeful Emily, "and the receipt of a letter from my lawyers yesterday evening, enclosing a cheque for some rents of mine, gave me an idea, and with your assistance, Thompson, I concocted a harmless little forgery, placed it in the lawyer's envelope, and carefully laid it last night on the major's door-mat. I knew he would pick it up and read it, and I did think that perhaps it would frighten him into running away and save me from the trouble of administering to him this exposure of his horrid meanness. But no, he brought it to me this morning, assumed complete ignorance, and during the whole of the interview he has proved to me conclusively, if I had wanted any further proof, that he had intended to marry me solely for my wretched money, 'the country house and the decent animal or two.' And now I hope he is thoroughly satisfied with his behaviour. I daresay this vision of the major's will soon become a reality; the only portion of the picture that will be missing will be its creator, Major Bombazine himself. And let me advise you, sir, that when you next take to building castles in the air, see that they are transformed into substantial edifices before you commence to boast about them."

"And finally, Major Bombazine," continued

Emily, who had relieved her feelings with great gusto and much internal satisfaction, "I have the infinite pleasure of wishing you a very long adieu;" and she made the unfortunate major a most profound curtsey.

"Good-bye, major," said Thompson Phipps, quite airily for him; "I'm afraid we shall miss you, you know."

The major to his dying day could never precisely remember how he contrived to get out of the room and out of the house. His only recollection was that of the mingled laughter of the merciless widow and her affianced husband, which followed him down the stairs and into the street.

The betrayer of the poor major's boastings got hold of the story, much to the major's mortification, and the men at the Cannon-ball were laughing about it for weeks; indeed the major found the situation so unbearable that he was forced to betake himself to Brighton, and permit the laugh to wear itself out. But they tell the tale about the major's "country house and the decent animal or two" to this day at the Cannon-ball.

Not the least galling of Major Bombazine's reflections were caused by the following announcement in the *Times*, which caught the major's eye some three weeks after his ignominious defeat by Mrs. Lovejoy:—

"At St. Solomon's, Bloomsbury, on the 21st inst., Thompson Phipps, Mus. Bac. Oxon., to Emily, widow of the late Benjamin Lovejoy, J.P."

THE MISTS.

MOUNTAIN MIST.

WHEN the morning clouds unfurl
Tints of ruby, rays of pearl,
And the dew-drops shake
As they light and wake;

At the foot of some blue height,
Mystic, faint in the low light,
In the joy of morn
The light mist is born.

In the vale it gathers strength,
Climbs the towering peaks at length,
And flows free and wide
O'er the mountainside.

Down through lightning-splitten rifts,
To the purple depths it drifts;
Or on spirit-wings
To the verge it clings.

O'er each awful, dizzy vast
Its frail silver veil is cast;
Eagles cleave it through,
Rising in God's blue.

Precipices vast it scales,
Penetrates the grassy vales,
And as torrents fall,
It is round them all.

Over fountains as they leap
Into pools, cool, lucent, deep,
Dower'd with a voice,
Springing, to rejoice.

Round the crown of grand Mont Blanc
Grows it thick and lingers long;
Noiselessly it flows
O'er the ancient snows.

Vast and vague the pine-woods rear
By the chasms deep and sheer;

In the mist they seem
Shapes within a dream.

"Tis a spirit light whose feet
In the snow no mark can beat,
So it none may trace
To its hiding-place.

None may know and none can tell
Where this spirit, Mist, may dwell
When the sun doth rise
It to exorcise.

It may creep the ravines through
To some cavern dark and blue,
Some ice-cavern deep
Where it lies to sleep.

And when morn breaks from the night
O'er the mountain's wildest height,
In a livid stain,
Issue forth again.

Till but the dim peaks aspire
From it that the fervid fire
Of the sun may frame
Him in rosy flame.

Slow this grows a golden crown,
Lower now the mist creeps down,
Hiding, for the sun
Hath his race begun.

The broad heat of the noonday
Charms at last the mist away,
But when evening dew
Falls, it lives anew.

THE MIST OF THE FEN-LANDS.

Westward, when the broad sun dips,
Mist o'er dreamy fen-land drips,
An unwholesome sweat,
That the eve is wet.

The bright sun through its leprous haze
Dies a red and angry blaze,
And through it the sheen
Of fen-fire is seen.

Malformed foliage grows and rots,
Knotted into snaky knots,
Rank and tangled weeds
Grow amidst gaunt reeds.

O'er these hollow reeds and grass
Falteringly the low winds pass
Moaning to the sky
Hoarsely, fearfully.

Ne'er so dread a mist that broods
Over towns or solitudes
Yet was seen by men,
As this of the fen.

For the odour it exhales
All with vital life assails,
And its clammy breath
Is the blight of death.

All the level, dismal land
By these evil odours fann'd
In a fainting state,
Lieth desolate.

T. E. M.

LUTCHINA,
OR, THE BLUE LAKE.
BY A. POCKLINGTON.

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PART I.—continued.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EPILOGUE.

THE next day the Gräfinn sent her maid to inquire at the mill, and to take note of what might be required for the sick child. The woman returned full of praises of the miller's gentleness and the child's beauty. She had seen the mother, a humble-looking individual as plain as the miller—with her long upper lip and want of teeth it was a marvel she could have borne such an infant.

"How is the little one?" asked the Baron when the woman was gone. He had approached his charitable cousin from the other end of the great library to ask the question.

"No better—perhaps worse. I doubt but that he will die."

"God forbid!" murmured the old gentleman, grief clouding his kind face; "it was such an engaging little thing."

"I only saw the child once and was struck, too, by it. It has beautiful eyes." The Countess peered over her spectacles at the Baron as she said the last words.

"Yes—they are so blue," he answered readily; "but to me all children have beautiful eyes."

Then he turned away and the Countess let her knitting fall on her knee with a gesture of supreme contempt. "They are blind as moles, these men," she mused; "they never see when two things are alike. Had I the ordering of the world every man should come into it with magnifying glasses on his nose!"

Towards evening the Baron went for a walk; he thought he would go past the mill, and see whether it were true that the once merry little child lay at death's door. As he reached the gate, it was opened by the woman with the long upper lip. "How fares thy babe?" asked the Herr, wondering at her ugliness. A tear ran slowly down the woman's cheek.

"Ah, Herr—he is so ill—the fever runs higher since the morning. Ah, it is the saddest sight!" Then she hurried down the road with a basket on her arm, and the Baron after a moment's hesitation went on up the little path to the door of the mill. Lutchina's roses bloomed above his head, and the sun sent long golden rays through the fir bordering the garden; mingled with the twittering of the swallows, and the pleasant hum of bees came the soft babble of the river. But the mill-wheel was dumb, and amidst all the peaceful sights and sounds about him the Baron's heart grew heavy. "The little ones die," he thought, "and the old who would so gladly lie at rest in the warm earth, live on."

Matthias opened the door—his face was worn with a night's watching. Something caught his breath as he looked at the Baron, who asked if nothing could be done for the child; would they let him send his own physician?

"The child has everything of the best," answered the miller, "only the fever must run its course." He paused as a gust of wind struck one of the roses above him sharply against a rough end of the porch—it fell at the Baron's feet as if cut with a knife. The old man stooped to pick it up, when on his hand touching it he thrust the flower to one side, as if stung by a bitter memory.

"Baron," said the miller at once, yet a little sombrely, "will you enter? I have something I should say to you."

"If it is about that thing, it can wait," returned the Baron briefly. His face was flushed—the rose had set a thorn in his bosom rankling.

"It must not wait. Baron, I entreat of you."

There was a tone of authority quite new in the humble miller, and, as if seized by the hand of fate, the old man obeyed it—he entered the silent mill, and sat down by the hearth as of old. A small fire glowed, and a little pot simmered above it. He looked into the embers, and Matthias, leaning against the chimney corner, looked at him. "The child—how can you leave the child?" asked the Baron.

"Some one tends it. Will the Herr let me speak?"

"Say on." But there the Baron paused, he raised his hand with a gesture of deprecation. "No, no," said he, "I cannot listen. It is no new truth thou hast to tell. One only of two things can have happened that night—either my wife the Baroness was drowned, or—." He paused again, unable to name the fearful alternative. Could it already have become the common talk of his peasants? But the miller quickly put an end to his suspense.

"Herr," said he, "is it for me to speak evil of my master's daughter? If it were no good thing I had to say, surely I would keep silent. Afterwards you may be glad to have heard me." The Baron leaned his chin on his staff, and gazed again into the embers.

"Proceed," said he testily, to hide his emotion.

"Herr, I am a man of few words, and I may speak plainly; you will forgive me if I pain you?"

The Baron nodded assent, and Matthias began at once. "It is some years since, but it seems only like yesterday, that on returning to the mill one evening, as a summer storm was dying away, I found a stranger seated by the hearth. Clad in a worn garb, and with his pictures by his side, we took him for what he looked and asked no questions, then or ever. We thought him a wandering painter, but it was not so; this man was your stepson, Count Melchior von Wolfthurm. I say we knew it not—and to suit his own purposes it pleased the Count to uphold his deceit. The Baron will remember that his son passed that summer at the Schloss, but he may not know that he came often to the mill, or that it was then he won the love of Lutchina Graf, the miller's daughter."

"I never knew it—God help me!" muttered the old man.

"Well, that is the truth," continued Matthias, "he had a smooth tongue, but there is no doubt he was much struck with Lutchina, for she was so beautiful and had a way with her that went straight to a man's heart." The miller sighed and lingered a moment in his narrative. "Be that as it may," he resumed, "the Count left the country. That he carried Lutchina's very soul with him he

knew well enough—the thought doubtless pleased him, and she—well she was content, since he promised to return the following summer. But the summer that should have brought him came and went without sign or word from the Count. There were beautiful women in the lands through which he passed—maybe he forgot her, maybe his pride rebelled at thought of marriage with a peasant's daughter," said Matthias mercilessly. "Herr, the winter that followed was bitter; it went hard with us all, hardest with Lutchina. She still loved and clung to the shadow of her once strong hope. 'He will come this next summer,' she said. 'Then her father fell ill and pressed your suit upon her. He was not a good man, the miller.'

In the little silence that ensued, as Matthias said these words, a wail from the sick child rose on the air, but the Baron did not seem to hear it—his venerable white head was as set as one of his own marbles—he was lost in the past. Matthias continued: "Lutchina prayed for delay; she would give her answer when the summer came; like women she was slow to mistrust the man she loved. But as you know, Herr, Count Melchior did not return that year—no, nor till long afterwards, and Lutchina, because hope was at last dead within her, and because her father lay, as she believed at death's door, listened to his reasoning and married you. There she did a wrong thing," continued Matthias with a sigh, "and once we cross the bridge of Wrong, the path grows so choked with mud and weeds it is hard to discern again the white blossom of Right. For see, when a woman becomes wife she should do it with a clean heart; if she cannot thrust out the old love, at least she should make confession of it, for love like murder will out; so would there be two to fight the dark hour when it came and not one frail soul alone. Lutchina spoke not of her past to thee, Herr Baron—it was a sin of omission, and bore its fruit in the days that followed. For so soon as you were returned to the Schloss, Count Melchior came home. Whether or no it was the remembrance of her that brought him back, their meeting, under such circumstances, must have been terrible enough. And see, Herr Baron, if it had been hard for Lutchina to tell thee of her past life before, it had now grown to be impossible. She could have willed at that time for the whole world to have been between her and Count Melchior, but how could she bid thee banish thy stepson from the Schloss? A man, nevertheless, in such case could not have borne it, but would have spoken straight out—women with finer craft do differently, do as Lutchina did. She would not urge the Count's departure, but by many subtle ways she endeavoured to keep away from him and nearer to thee. The Count was quick to note her coldness and seeming aversion to him, it wounded his pride—maybe rekindled the dead spark of his love—who knows! but being a masterful man he resolved that, soon or late Lutchina's soul should return to his keeping. To this end he remained at the Schloss even through a bitter winter. Who shall know what Lutchina's struggles were, who shall know when the Count's persistence first forced a breach in the stormed citadel of her heart? She had loved him always till his return to the Schloss, but then a righteous anger rose within her and she battled against him

and his wiles. I know she did it bravely," sighed loyal Matthias. "Herr," he continued, for the Baron maintained his silence, "We all wronged her in those days, you and the Countess, and I. Because she felt her strength going the Baroness was pleased the Frau Gräfin should come—two instead of one would then stand between her and thy son. But his strong will had already minded her courage, and the Gräfin's presence served but to foster the Count's cruel scheme. From that day he grew more remorseless in his endeavours to win Lutchina's thoughts to himself. Also fate seemed at work to further him. For some reason the Herr Baron's manner changed towards his wife, he was chill and distant—perhaps the Countess Elizabeth suspected and spoke. It was to spare thee pain and humiliation that Lutchina till now had struggled in silence against her tempter, and thy changed demeanour, inevitable though it might be, froze her heart. Again, the discovery I made of hidden gold in the room above us, could not but fail to lay its mark upon her. Her father in the old days had lied to her. The sunshine of love and trust was melting, if not gone from her life."

Matthias paused, and the Baron raised his bent head.

"Why do you tell me these things?" he asked in a voice of pain. "I tell you it is more than I can bear."

"Baron, I tell you but the truth—the old truth with the new light on it," urged the miller, "and my tale will soon be told. I say we wronged the Baroness in those days—I as greatly as others—for we judged her on the surface, nor ever looked beneath. Harassed and humiliated on every side, it was natural, if wrong, that she should at length turn to that point from whence flowed a constant stream of tender reverence and affection. Count Melchior regained his power, regained something of Lutchina's love—it might, as before, have been his for ever, but for one little thing—"

"Nay, it was altogether his," broke in the Baron with fierce impatience, Grutli's laugh in his ears, the scene on the bridge before his eyes.

"Not so," answered Matthias. "One thing saved her: the old love gave birth to a new—*love alone for thee*."

"It is impossible," muttered the old man.

"To us; not to her. We do not know how these things happen. God comes to us without bell; so also the good, noble Herr. It is the truth I tell you. Little by little, just so gently as the corn sprouts, and the soft spring grasses with the flowers in between, the Baroness learned to love, to cherish only you. The colder, the more distant you grew towards her, the stronger waxed this new-born love, till in the end it brought destruction with it. On the day of the storm she had wrung a promise from Count Melchior that he would go away and leave her a little while in peace, and he on his side lured her to the bridge beside us to bid her a last farewell—"

"I saw her," interposed the Baron.

Matthias let a gesture of surprise escape him.

"I too," said he. "But, Herr, we misjudged her. She came determined to bid the Count an

eternal farewell—to tell him that her love for him was dying—nay, was dead already—when in the midst of his burning words, as fate would have it, I disturbed them. The Count struck me a blow which rendered me stupid; the Baroness fled home. It seems you would not see her that night, and the thought preyed upon her; she could not tell you had stood witness to the meeting on the bridge. A little later and the end came. The blow the Count had given me rankled in her mind; she thought I might be dead, and through the dark night she came to the mill to see. I knew it not till afterwards. Silently as she had come she left. She went home, Baron—home to the Schloss. All were sleeping but you."

"Aye, and I spurned her," said the Baron, rising suddenly and beginning to pace the hearth. "'Go,' I said; 'I do not want you—go!' But she mistook my meaning. My anger broke bounds, and took words to itself. Never—ah, never did I deem she would read them wrongly!—that on such a night she could believe I would banish her the Schloss. Himmel! you break my heart with these memories, Matthias."

"Who knows, Baron, but I may also heal the wound? It is best you should hear me out. Lutchina, as all know, must have wandered forth again that night till she came upon the brink of the Blue Lake. What happened after that none know save myself."

"I see the old truth with the new light. I see that my wife was sinned against, if also she sinned. Tell me the rest, and quickly, friend."

"See here, then, Herr, it is a strange story. The Baroness was heartbroken. You did not want her; all her struggles after the right and against an overpowering wrong had been in vain. There were but two ways open to her by which she could reach to peace and rest. The one we will not name; the other was death. She chose the last. The Herr will remember the old legend that clings to the lake—how that it buries every unclean thing that rests on its waters, but casts up the pure amongst the flowers. The Baroness remembered it too well. She was innocent of the evil imputed to her; let her die, and let the Blue Lake speak for her."

The Baron caught hold of the miller with his trembling hands.

"Matthias, you have wronged me!" he cried. "From your lips I have it the waters cast up nothing."

"They cast up all that was needed, Baron—they cast up Lutchina; but she would not let me speak—"

"She lives then?" The Baron was very pale.

"Aye, though for months she lay at point of death, for her sorrow and the waters had used her cruelly. Herr, dare you forgive and forget? She says always you do not want her, but I could no longer withhold the truth. It seemed as if the child drew you to us."

"The child!" The Baron looked at the miller, a world of mingled trouble and joy in his eyes. "Take me to them," he murmured, for a wave of light broke in upon him.

Matthias opened the door of an adjoining room, and the Baron passed through, and, to judge by the miller's face at that moment, the lot of the peace-

maker on earth did not seem so uneasy a one as the Baron had decided. For within the room he saw a husband and wife kneeling side by side, and clasped within their own the hand of a little child.

And Matthias?

Ask the children who is the most favoured guest in the old Schloss of Wolfthurm, and they will point to a man with a broad brow and calm and serious eyes, who during his visits divides his hours between the library and the nursery. A friend, who is not there so often as they would wish, for he is a great man, whose time is no longer his own. That is Matthias.

The Countess Elizabeth comes to see her cousins at rare intervals, and always leaves them with her nose in the air.

"He is growing quite foolish, the Baron," she says to her gossips in the city. "Only imagine, he is infatuated with his wife and a man who makes machines!"

But, for all that, she is very partial to a little lad with blue eyes who once lay in her lap.

And Melchior?

Ask the Blue Lake.

THE END.



SOME REMARKABLE ERRORS.

THE number of errors, bibliographical and otherwise, which have called forth the wit and derision of mankind is undoubtedly both large and varied; and an enumeration of the more important would fill a goodly-sized volume, even if those committed by the much, and often unfairly, abused printer be excepted.

Perhaps no class of literature affords, of itself, so many instances of palpable misprints and absurd blunders as the Bible does. In Field's Pearl edition of 1653, 1 Cor. vi. 9, this extraordinary statement occurs: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the kingdom of God?" In its correct form, the sentence of course states that the unrighteous shall *not* inherit, &c. Another astounding biblical error, or more correctly speaking, omission, occurs in Barker's octavo of 1631: wherein the seventh commandment is entirely left out. For this carelessness Barker is said to have been fined £300, which he compounded by presenting a set of rich types to one of the universities. The number of blunders in a supposititious Edinburgh black-letter Testament of 1694, Dr. Lee has estimated at two thousand.

But even misprints and errors generally have their value. They serve in several instances to detect a clever forgery that would otherwise pass muster as an original. This is notably the case with the celebrated Elzevir *Cæsar* of 1635—the "good copy" having the number of the 149th page misprinted 153. Many an enthusiastic book-collector has been finely "sold" over the work just mentioned; because there are numerous 1635 *Cæsar*'s in the market having the 149th page duly printed as such—a circumstance which at once exposes the counterfeit. In by far the majority of instances careful study and exceedingly minute and critical comparisons are absolutely essential to detect a fraud from the genuine article. For

instance, the title-page, and a number of the succeeding pages of a clever imposition may bear the closest possible resemblance to the original issue, but a deeper and more minute investigation will in some manner reveal the spurious article. Occasionally, a mistake or two in a publication has been its only saviour from hopeless oblivion.

It is well known that errors of commission are by no means absent from the works of Shakespeare. For instance, Macbeth was not slain by Macduff at Dunsinane, but made his escape and was killed in 1056 at Lumphanan. In *Twelfth Night* the clown says, "Primo, secundo, tertio, is a good play; and the old saying is, the third pays for all: the triplex, sir, is a good tripping measure; or the bells of Saint Bennet, sir, may put you in mind; one, two, three" (act. v. sc. 1). It would be most interesting to know how an Illyrian clown could have known anything about a London church. The *Winter's Tale*, as our readers are probably aware, contains at least two astounding blunders: one in which the vessel bearing Perdita is spoken of as being "driven by storm on the coast of Bohemia," which country however has no sea-board at all; and again, where the "Third Gentleman" refers to Julio Romano, an Italian artist and architect (1492-1546), or nearly two thousand years before Romano was born. In *Coriolanus*, Delphi is not an island, but a city of Phocis*; and Volumnia, not Virgilia, was the wife, and Veturia, not Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus. The "sweet bairn of Avon," moreover, speaks in the first act of *Hamlet* of the beetling cliff of Elsinore, which has no cliff whatever. Other examples could be mentioned.

Readers of Cervantes' immortal work, *The Achievements of Don Quixote*, will be much puzzled by several conflicting statements, or "errors," which are made in the course of the achievements. For instance, in part I. book iii. chap. 9, the author says, "Gives [de Passamonte], who was neither grateful nor good-natured, resolved to steal Sancho's ass, undervaluing Rozinante, as a subject that he could neither pawn nor sell. Accordingly, while the squire was asleep, he stole Dapple, and, before morning, was gone far enough to elude all pursuit. The appearance of Aurora, that rejoices the earth, had quite a contrary effect upon Sancho Panza, who, missing his Dapple, and searching for him in vain, began to utter the most woeful lamentation that ever was heard," &c. In the very next paragraph Cervantes is "caught napping" with a vengeance, for he says, "He [Sancho], therefore, jogged on leisurely after his master, sitting side-ways on his ass," &c.! In the third chapter of the same book, the author remarks: "True it is, the landlord had detained his [Sancho's] bags for the reckoning; but these Sancho did not miss in the confusion of his retreat;" but in a few chapters later the squire uses the bags, or wallet, for the contents of a portmanteau found on the road.

In that well-known lyric in the third Canto of *Don Juan*, commencing with "The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece," the following stanza contains an error which has been pointed out before—

* It may be noted that Robert Greene makes a somewhat similar error in *Dorastus and Faunus*.

A king sat on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

Dr. Brewer correctly notes that the entire number of sails was 1,200; of these 400 were wrecked before the battle off the coast of Sepias, and the number engaged could not by any means have exceeded 800. The king was of course Xerxes.

In his *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson has so often rejected, and in some instances reversed, the circumstances as related by Malory, that the material differences between the two writers are familiar to all students of poetry. They probably cannot be termed "errors."

In that charming poem of "our Father, Chaucer," *Troylus and Cressyde*, Pandarus, at the siege of Troy, is made to say—

And to himself ful soberly he saied,
From hasellwood there jolly Robin plaid.

Fancy Robin Hood and Calchas, Troylus and Little John, dancing in concert amid the merry greenwood trees of old England! But "Old Daa" is by no means alone in making such blunders of time and circumstances. Romances during the middle ages were teeming with such, and no more notable instance could be quoted than the *Orlando Furioso*, of Ariosto.

The works of "the Great Masters" are often sheer conglomerations of anachronisms. Italian, and indeed artists of other countries, used to make it no uncommon thing to paint a picture of a brother, or friend, and label it "Jesus Christ," or a mother with an imaginary child, which would be known to posterity as the "Madonna and Child" of such and such a one. There is, in the National Gallery, a splendid fresco, transferred to canvas, illustrating "The Return of Ulysses to Penelope." It is from the pencil of Bernardino di Betto—better known as Pinturicchio—and a mere glance at it will show how little of the Grecian style or habit the painter has thrown into it. Here we have Penelope seated at her loom, and on the floor at her right a damsels is shown winding thread on shuttle from a ball of yarn. The ship of Ulysses, and the personages themselves are as utterly un-Grecian as it is possible for them to be. Another great painter, Jacopo Robusti, better known as Tintoretto, arms the men with guns in the picture representing Israelites gathering manna in the wilderness. And Paul Veronese has introduced several Benedictine monks among the guests at his representation of the "Marriage Feast of Cana of Galilee." One cannot but feel convinced that the artists just named were fully cognizant of their own discrepancies in the matter of history, and that such were perpetrated from reasons best known to themselves.

It is perhaps after all a thankless task to play the part of a "snapper up of unconsidered trifles," especially when such "trifles" are the mistakes and errors of great men long since enrobed amid the master-minds of the world. Probably it is from this greatness that we notice them at all.

W. ROBERTS.

A RIVER LOVE STORY.

BY MARY FITZGIBBON.

Author of "A Trip to Manitoba."

WELL, I am not much good at telling a yarn, but if I must, here goes for a bit of a love-story I picked up in scraps when I was out in Canada; and if I do not put it together with exactly a finished touch, or put the stops in the right places, you must remember that I am out of my element, and pardon all such deficiencies.

I picked up the first bit two years ago, on the Ottawa river, upon the evening of one of the hottest July days I ever experienced.

Old country people who have only seen photographs of their friends in Canada, taken when they are up to the nose and down to the ears in furs, have no idea of what a hot July day is in Ottawa, when the lime-stone rock reflects and doubles the heat of the sun; 90° in the shade, and not a breath of air stirring. It was statement day in the office, too, and I had been kept pretty close until after six. I ate my dinner at the Russel without much waste of time, and, lighting a cigar, jumped on the end of a tram, or street-car, as they call them there, down to the boat-house.

I did not belong to the Club, so kept my boat at a little old French Canadian's on the wharf. Ratté was in a devil of a temper about some one or other, and was firing off a fusilade of French invectives, so that it was some little time before he calmed down sufficiently into muttered Sá-crés to get my skiff out. The sun was well below the horizon, when, out into the stream, I let my oars rest and took off my coat.

You haven't such rivers in England—broad, blue, glittering streams—and while I paused some of the sense of the beauties of that one found its way into even my prosaic soul. The glowing, golden, cloudless sunset; the pale tints blending into the blue of the sky overhead; the long, lithe bridge that spans the stream above where the roaring Chaudiere boils and foams. The graceful turrets and towers of the Parliament buildings crowning the dark cedar-covered cliff, beneath which—eighty feet below—the river flows calm and strong, its swift strength the sequence of its plunge but a few yards before. The ferry-boat trending its way with all the impulsive energy so characteristic of the craft; the black demon-like tug with its long train of huge, timoer-laden barges; the great white mail-boat steaming proudly up the water highway, leaving a trail of swells in her wake, over which all the small craft and "boomed" logs danced again.

Dropping slowly down the river, I passed the Rideau Falls, their curtains of yellow water and frothy foam, the bright little Brigham's Creek opposite, Haycock's Point, disfigured with the uninteresting piles of sawn timber, to the outlet of the Gatineau river. Scarcely more than dipping my sculls in the water, I was lost in a delicious day-dream of rest and relief from the day's intense heat, when the clear notes of a man's voice roused me. He was singing the native boat-song, but his voice was a heavy percentage better than the ordinary raftsmen's. Sitting astride a saw-log,

his feet in the water, his trousers rolled to his knees, his bright red flannel shirt loose at the throat and tied about his waist with a blue scarf, his broad straw hat set well back upon his head, showing the strong, straight-featured, well-bronzed face, his boots slung about his neck, and a short, light paddle in his hand. It needed not the glitter of the gold rings in his ears, or the clear refrain, "En roulaut ma boule," to tell me that here was a good specimen of the Canadian woodsman, raftsman, or voyageur.

Resting on my oars, I watched him steer his novel craft down the river, heard the cheery shouts which accosted him from raft and "boane" as we passed, the hearty "Bon voyage, mon ami!" which he paused in his song to return, until he drew near, close to the cliff above Rockcliffe, the cedar-covered spur that forms the lower arm about the beautiful little Dufferin Bay. Dipping his paddle deep into the sawdust cream that floats upon the water there, to steady himself, he stopped, and in clearer, more penetrating tones, sang again the chorus of his song: ere he had finished, a voice from the shore—a thin, shrill soprano—joined his firmer tones.

"C'est vous, Marie?" he called out.

"En bien! Quel autre?" was the laughing reply.

"What other, indeed, ma belle, who would watch for François as thou dost, petite?"

"Marie, it is farewell to-night," he added in rapid French, which I translate as best I can. "For weeks, perhaps months; the raft is below the shallows, while I follow!"

"Why behind, François?" cried the girl, swinging herself lightly down by the aid of bush and ledge until she stood upon a projecting shelf of rock, her arm thrown about an overhanging bough.

"But a little, Marie! The boys kept me after the raft cleared. They were merry, and the time pass'd quickly."

"Your pockets grew lighter, too! Is it not so, François?"

"Ah, a little, perhaps a little, but not much. I was the first to come away, for did I not know my little one waited by the river! But tell me, Marie, were you to the Mass this morning, and did you say an Avé for a friend?" And with another stroke of the paddle the lad drew his log within a few feet of the girl.

"Tis always the way! François lingers, drinks, wastes his money, while Marie is to say Avés and wait—until the gran'père misses her. Then it is farewell!" and drawing back against the rock she looked sadly yet defiantly at her lover.

"Ah, it is true, Marie, but I am no worse than the others. I came away the first to-night, Marie; give me a ribbon, a leaf, to keep me true—to keep the light of your eyes shining in mine until I return again."

"If you be not true without I can find one who is," she replied saucily, yet drew a branch of the rose raspberry near her, broke off one of its clusters of bright flowers, and pressing her lips upon the rich blossoms, tossed it to François.

"Merci, Marie chérie!" and catching it dexterously he took the kiss so carried, and fastened the flower in the band of his hat. "Ah, you know I never forgot you, m'aimé. Adieu."

"Adieu, François. Bon voyage. Mon Dieu, but the days will be long until you return," said Marie sadly.

"But they will end, Marie; keep a brave heart. I will return," said François in a deep, tender voice. "I will return sûre, sûre; with fuller pockets, too. Will you not trust me, ma belle?"

"Yes, yes, you know I do!" and the girl leaned over the water as if she would fain bridge the space that parted her from her lover.

A hoarse, querulous voice calling her name startling her, she turned, sprang up the rocks, and with a parting wave of her hand from the summit, disappeared among the trees.

After waiting some minutes, and Marie not returning, François paddled out into the stream.

The sky was still clear, the golden light of the west had faded and given place to the silvery light of the moon, nearly at the full, her beams falling in a long broad pathway upon the water; the life and sounds of the day were silent; the plaintive note of the whip-poor-will singing on the shore, alone broke the stillness, when I rowed out of the Gatineau river, and paused opposite Rockcliffe on my way homewards. Presently I saw Marie standing alone on the cliff side, gazing down to where the moonlight lay, and heard as she did away in the distance the faint echoes of the voice she loved singing—

Loyal je sera durant ma vie—

and knew that the words had found an echo in the heart of the bright little French Canadian girl.

The knot of gossiping, chattering French Canadian women at the Pointe told me afterwards how François's mother and father had died of small-pox years ago when he was but a baby; how they all nursed him; how he grew up and went to the school; what a bon garçon he was. The old parish priest's eyes glistened as he talked of the clever boy who might have gone on and entered the Church, the voice that might have been so much to him there, but that he was led away by the tales of the raftsmen, their free life in the bush, their merry trips down the river to Quebec, until he could not resist, but was away with them to the wilds of the upper Ottawa and the shanties of the St. Maurice; the men on the ferry, of how Marie and François worked together in the old "bonne," gathering in the drift-wood from the mills; of how they crossed with the pails of berries they had picked the day before; the fishermen, of the long evenings spent on the river when they caught no fish, but returned empty-handed to receive the growls and scoldings of the cross old gran'père; les Bonne Sœurs, of Marie's devotion to the querulous, decrepit old man who was the only relation she had in the world, and of her love for François; while his fellow-raftsmen knew that though he sometimes made "a night of it," the influence of his Marie was strong enough to keep him out of a great deal of harm that they indulged in as a matter of course.

'Twas little wonder that François loved the raftsmen's life, the warm shanties in the bush in the winter where they gathered round the blazing log fires after the day's hewing and hauling the great logs on to the ice bound streams, the merry tales told over their panikins of scalding hot

tea, the free outdoor life where none of the troubles or temptations of civilization could reach them. Or in the summer, who that has not tried it can understand the exhilarating delight of riding the turbid waters of the rapids on crib or in canoe, the keen interest of steering clear of rocks round which the water swirls and dashes in showers of spray. Of the race down the smooth bit, only to meet wilder, madder falls below; the sweep down the wooden-walled slides, the bound timbers of the crib, groaning with the strain, letting the water up between, knowing that if eye or hand fails nothing on earth can save you; then, when the broad smooth river is reached, the cribs are joined, the great oars plied to the rhythm of their songs they wend their way down the long reaches of "Ottawa's tide," past the Bells of Ste. Anne's, the beauties of Vandreuil, to the grand St. Lawrence.

Night after night, while the summer lasted, I took my pull upon the river, sometimes seeing Marie on the shore, sometimes with her friends at the Pointe opposite, but never with François. Once when lingering near the bay I found her gathering wood in the old bonne. Seeing her struggling with a rather larger slab than usual, I offered my awkward assistance, her bright smile and merry "Merci, monsieur," and naive explanation of le gran'père being "tress malade," formed a fair enough introduction to the girl. I got into the way of giving her a passing greeting or stopping for a few minutes' chat; from the villagers I heard that her lover was still down the river.

Winter set in, the river "took" as the Canadians say, there was no more boating. The fall of snow was great and the cold more intense than for many previous years, and I saw no more of my friends. In the spring I learned that François had not returned, that the old man had crawled himself from his chair to his bed, and from thence to the grave, before the close of the old year; that the cottage, grown lonely and dreary for Marie, she had gone into town as housemaid in one of the great houses to earn some of the good wages given during the "session," but that she had never failed to cross the river to early Mass on Sunday morning, nor to ask the question, "Had Francois returned?" to receive, alas! the same reply, "Ah, non. Pas encore!"

Spring with its thaw and rains, the soft snow and treacherous ice, but as long as crossing was possible Marie came. The frequent wettings, the ice-cold water, the cold damp winds and rain, were too much for the girl already consumptively inclined. One neglected cold after another, the anxiety of hope deferred, the loss of appetite, all combined; and before the end of July, Marie had come back to the village to die. Kind hands tended her, the loving nuns cared for her, the whole village grieved over her.

While she lay on the gallery on one of the quaint wooden chairs one sees in every *habitant's* house, even the children playing on the road-side hushed their shrill screams and noisy chatter; the old priest shook his grey head over her sadly, grieving with her for the lad who never returned. Marie had ceased to ask for him now, but lay most of the day in the broad sunshine, gazing idly on the river; sometimes, if feeling a little better, she helped the girls with sewing or crotchet-work—but all with the listlessness of expired hope.

Early in August there was unwonted excitement in the village; all who could get away, and could command the few dollars necessary, were going "en pilgrimage" to the shrine of "La Bonne Ste. Anne de Beaupré," there to be cured of all their ills, absolved of their sins, and pray for the good offices of the saint.

Roused into interest by the excitement about her, Marie listened, and, to the astonishment of many, who but then had been discussing the probability of her death, and having time to attend to her funeral before they left, announced her intention of going with them.

It is unnecessary to enter into particulars of how the expectation gave her a fictitious strength, how the neighbours first protested and then helped her, and the good old priest took her under his especial care; how upon the bright August morning the long snake-like train, gathering links like the jointed snake of the south at every station, carried the pilgrims to the wharf at Montreal.

The Dominion newspapers were so full of these pilgrimages and the miraculous cures effected at the shrine, that no one of my friends expressed much wonder when I joined one to see for myself what manner of things they were.

One of the largest steamers of the Montreal, Richelieu and Quebec line lay at the wharf, while the motley crowd of nearly two thousand people came on board. The lame, the halt, the blind, the paralysed, the decrepit, the deformed, the young, the old; here a delicate child was carried over the narrow gangway, there a boy whose legs were powerless sat on the muddy planks waiting the kindly offices of the man who was guiding the faltering steps of a blind old woman into the boat—the patient, trusting expression on his face a contrast to the careworn, troubled lines on that of the woman in seedy but respectable black who stood near; there a man well-nigh doubled by age leant on the arm of a strong stalwart bronzed-cheeked son; there borne in loving arms a clinging delicate woman was taken on board; cabs drove up, the clear sharp "Gardez la" and "Avance" of the drivers, parting the crowd right and left, to let the brisk priest descend, or a pilgrim incapable of even the short step from train to boat.

In one of the last was Marie, her great black eyes shining like stars, the pink flush of excitement on the pale cheek. She remembers me, and I know by the sad smile that flits across her face that her lover has never returned.

Mechanically I watch the stream of people embark quietly and orderly, without a disagreeable word, noisy altercation, or ill-bred shoving; pleasant good-nature, bright rejoinder, apologies gracefully accepted, the utmost protest a vehement "Doucement, mon ami."

Yet these were all common people, the lower classes of the French Canadian population of the Dominion. I thought many of our so-called aristocratic crowds might take a lesson from them.

The priests were here, there, and everywhere—helping this one, talking to that one; some bright and well-clothed, some old, grey, dusty, and ill-kempt, but all treated with respect. The majority of the pilgrims had baskets laden with provisions, and the boat was not well out into the river below St. Helen's Isle before they were discussing the good things they contained. Happy, indeed, were the groups which had a priest for a centre.

As the night closed in the decks gradually cleared, until at midnight I was there alone. Words fail me when I try to describe the weird night on the calm water, the broad river unstirred by a ripple, save that made by the paddle of the boat; the grey clouds overhead, through which the moon shone fitfully; the dark distant shores, the low cry of the distant night-bird, the great pulse of the steamer beating in regular throbs, unconscious of the human freight she carried. The silence became oppressive, and I turned to seek my state-room, which I had to traverse the length of the saloon to reach, in and out amongst the crowd, some asleep where they sat or lay. Many on their knees, drowsily telling their beads; here and there a priest leant over a bent head, hearing with pity or indifference a confession; there a handsome young Father was taking a quiet nap while his toothless parishioner mumbled over the catalogue of his sins—a stolen pleasure for which he, too, would have to do penance; here a woman, slight and delicate, sat, her baby on her knee, her head upon her husband's shoulder asleep, while he on his knees said the prayers for both. Beside one of the upright pillars Marie sat, her hands folded in her lap, her wakeful eyes staring into space.

Making my way to her, I asked why she had not gone to bed. Surely some one might have seen that she got a state-room.

"Ah! no," she said, in so low a tone that I had to bend down to catch it. "It is better so, for when I lie down the cough is terrible; it tears me to pieces. Ah! it is very bad."

Wrapping my rug about her from shoulders to feet, I roused a sleepy steward, and procured a pillow, which I arranged so that she could rest her head; then seeing she was a degree more comfortable, I went away, carrying with me the look of gratitude in her sad eyes.

The day broke brightly over the blue waters of the St. Lawrence. Well may the Canadians be proud of their glorious river, "Le Belle St. Laurent."

The soft mist on the water, the rosy sun rising to a cloudless sky gilding the towers of the citadel set on the rock at Quebec, flooding with light the heights of Abraham; the dark woods behind, the blue water below deepening the shadows, and touching with gilded fingers the topmasts of the shipping lying at anchor there.

Dear old Quebec, with your terraces and quaint old streets, your fortified gates, and memories of brave men!

At the wharf two little ferry-boats lay lashed together to carry the pilgrims on to the shrine. It took but a few minutes to make the transfer, and as we steamed down past the island of Orleans, the Montmorenci Falls and their cones of foam, the garden-like Côte de Beaupré, the beautiful Hymn to the Virgin, sung by the trained voices of the priests, floated on the morning air. Men with bowed heads prayed unceasingly; women, trust and faith in their faces, sat with closed eyes, fearing to disturb their thoughts by the scenes about them; children in awe-stricken silence clinging to their mothers' skirts. No boat or vessel crossed our path or met us on our way. We were steaming down the broad waves of life to a haven where the true pilgrim deemed all his hopes would be realized, all his doubts satisfied, his troubles end.

Landing at the long pier, we climbed the steps, for the tide was out, and wended our way to the great church, up through the warm, unpaved village street—a mere handful of houses in a straggling line upon the narrow strip of land at the base of the hills. The August sun was hot, the tide out, the air still, the pools upon the irregular roads stagnant, every doorway and window swarming with house-flies, the odours of decaying vegetable matter and fresh garlic fighting for the mastery; every house an eating-house of more or less wretched description; but the pilgrims looked neither to the right nor left. Were they not near the shrine of "La Bonne Ste. Anne?" More impressive grew their muttered prayers, more intense the thoughtfulness of those who had a boon to ask. On they went until, marshalled by cossocked, skull-capped priests, they filled the church.

An unbeliever, a heretic, I declined a kindly old priest's offer of the confessional and wandered up the hill-side. Gaining the summit, I sat down by a tiny cross raised upon a cairn of stones, through which the water trickled drop by drop, and gazed to my heart's content upon the scene below.

The everlasting hills, rising one above another until they faded in the distant blue, overlapping each upon the river at their feet until it is lost to sight. *Kepec! It is shut!* the Indians say; hence the name Quebec; none more appropriate, for whether going down or coming up the stream, the hills seem to shut the gateway to the port. The varied shades of green and brown, the ribbon-like rivers and foaming falls, the nestling villages, the lights and shadows, the glittering sunlit water, the tiny yacht lying sailless in mid-stream; my thoughts followed its royal mistress, our own Princess, à la Canadienne, to some one of the lovely valleys near where she was, perchance, carrying away with her a memory of a happy day upon Canadian shores.

Idly I sat and dreamed until the narrow train of pilgrims began to issue from the church and tread their way up past the arched shrines that shaded the miraculous waters; for Ste. Anne, to reward the French chevalier who fulfilled his vow and built a chapel upon the shore, to which with favouring winds she sent his wrecked and sinking ships, had given healing to the many springs which gushed from the mountain side. Many stayed to bathe afflicted limbs in the water bubbling over the stones, many dipped their fingers in the vessels of holy water over which upon rude boards they read the words—

"*La Bonne Ste. Anne,
Priez pour nous?*"

Many with eager feet went on to the little convent further up. Following in the train of the latter, I gained the convent door, just as a sweet-faced, white-coiffured nun laid her hand upon poor Marie's shoulder, bade her enter, rest and kneel in the little chapel of La Bonne Ste. Anne, adding, as the white face and eager eyes were turned to her—

"Ah, pauvre amie, do not forget your graces."*

Following the girl until she sank upon her

knees before the altar in the scrupulously clean, yet tawdry, fantastically decorated little chapel, I needed not the power of a Stuart Cumberland to read the petition that went up from poor Marie's heart.

What a strange burlesque of all the awe and intense religious fervour that characterized the coming of the pilgrims was the return! The laughing, chattering voices, the vehement arguments, the fierce life, the vociferous demands for breakfast, the haggling with the eating-house proprietors, the energy of the saleswomen in the little booths where stamped bits of silver, strings of beads, images and horrible pictures of the saints were sold; the thriving trade done by the old man who was the happy possessor of a bit of the original chapel—the concentrated expression of "greed" with which he hacked off scraps of decayed wood with a tobacco-stained knife and exchanged them for shillings; the clamours for empty bottles in which to convey home some of the precious water to those too ill or too poor to come for it themselves; the interest in the knot of blue jackets from Her Royal Highness's yacht; the bustle of re-embarking to return to Quebec; the happiness, the merriment of the majority—they had fulfilled their vows, made their petitions, confessed their sins and received absolution, put all their troubles behind them—even in Marie's eyes there was the light of renewed hope, her voice clearer and stronger than it had been for weeks. And though the exhaustion was great, she scarcely felt it as she lay on deck in the sunshine. Knowing that the pilgrims would remain several hours in Quebec, and anxious to make the most of them, I worked my way quietly across the crowded steamers to the side, in order to be among the first to land. Unheeding the vociferated objections of the wharf hands, I sprang on shore the moment she touched, and turned up through the lower town to the foot of the elevator, the steam lift that carries one at once up the steep cliff to the upper town. There, however, I was arrested by a voice I knew—a voice in a group of voyageurs on their way from one of the other wharves.

"What boats are those?" it asked.

"Those! Oh, the pilgrims from Ste. Anne's," was the reply. "They've been coming from all parts, and this looks the biggest crowd yet. Shall we go and see them, and hear what miracles they have brought back? Gros Louis was down last week, and he says there's a stack of crutches in the porch of the big church big enough to build a shanty."

"Yes, yes; let us go. Do you know where this lot comes from?"

"No, mon garçon; but we'll soon find out. Vite donc, or they'll be all on shore," answered a great, burly, high-shouldered man, who I concluded was Gros Louis.

A moment more, and they were standing close to the gangway, I taking my stand behind François, for it was he—broader, more bronzed, more manly-looking than ever; my heart beating with expectation of the meeting I knew must come. Many of François's old friends passed without noticing him, others grasped his hand, some threw their arms about him, and assailed him with questions, but he only asked, "Is Marie here?" The sad shake of the head, the pity in the tones that uttered the "C'est, pauvre Marie,"

* Petitions, if asked upon entering a church for the first time, are said to be always granted.

prepared him in a measure for the white-faced, dying Marie he saw presently carried on shore.

One step—one great sob of misery that well-nigh choked him—and their hands met; but the flash of joy that leaped into her eyes, the outstretched arms told that Marie's petition was answered: she saw her lover once more on earth.

In novels, I suppose my pretty piquante little French girl would recover, marry, and live happy ever after; but not so in real life.

They carried Marie to L'Hôtel Dieu, where, tended by the kind Sisters, she died; her hand in François' broad, brown palm—died as the day died, as the sun sank behind Wolfe's Cove, and the plains where the rival heroes fought and fell. The pilgrimage had gone on their way, leaving only François and the old priest to follow Marie to the grave. Then they, too, went their way; the old man to his charge, François to his work on the St. Maurice, leaving the savings which were to have made a home for his Marie with the Sisters to raise a stone to her memory and pay for Masses for the repose of her soul.

Why had he not written? Ah! he had; but the shantyman's postal delivery is not as well ordered as that of the State. The letter stuck in a slit made with a woodman's axe in the bark of a tree upon the outskirts of the bush, for any passer-by to take to the nearest post-office, had never reached its destination*; either the wayfarer had not posted it, or the wind had whirled it away into the forest, where the falling leaves or snow had buried it. Who can tell? Who knows, that had it been otherwise, other events might not have worked together, and my river love-story still had the same sad end?



PRISCIAN PRIM:

A TALE OF THE ISLE OF MAN.

BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.



CHAPTER I.

PRISCIAN PRIM had been turned out of an old-fashioned, neat domestic mould, and his clockwork had kept very accurate time ever since. The fact of his existence rendered it pretty certain that he must have had parents, but no one knew of them, and he never mentioned them; and, though he lived in Castletown and called himself a Manxman, his name alone is enough to show that he was an alien. The pride of belonging to the ancient race of the King Orrys, with its quaint Scandinavian customs and language, its courts and castles, and its semi-independence even now, could scarcely have influenced him; it is more likely that, being at Rome, he thought it best to proclaim himself a Roman. He was a lawyer without clients; a singer without much idea of music; comfortably off without apparent funds; silent without sense; reserved without

awakening curiosity—in short, a living paradox about whom nobody cared two straws. Not much of a *raison d'être* for the hero of a tale, you may say; yet some men are attractive from their very unattractiveness. Priscian Prim was paradoxical even in this.

The fair sex, however, held critically aloof from him. It was quite impossible to think of Priscian Prim and matrimony as otherwise than diametrically opposed to each other; he was a confirmed bachelor, for whom the tutored smile had never dimpled the spinster's cheek, for whom no widow had ever laid her artful little snares. A wife would have bored him inexpressibly, and children would have driven him to distraction. Having thought the matter over carefully, he had come to the conclusion that neither the one nor the other could contribute anything but noise and nuisance, and that both should be shunned as rigorously as lepers. In consequence, he treated the fair sex with polite coldness, his bow dividing his body into two equal straight lines at the hips, and his hat being raised to an angle of forty-five degrees by a mechanical turn of the wrist; and no instance was known of his having cumbered himself with a shawl or a sunshade. True, whenever he was persuaded to leave the quiet seclusion of his lodgings for "a small and early," he invariably put a good-sized roll of music under his arm, and, without pressing, plodded through it in his ravenly voice; but this he did partly out of courtesy, and partly because he believed in his own powers of entertainment when he chose to exert himself. Part-songs being introduced on these occasions in order to lighten the burden of the soloist, he tolerated womankind as a necessary evil, though their flippant behaviour made him shudder.

Too methodical to be otherwise than gravely prosaic, he was nevertheless always angling for information and never profiting by it, and, as some of it must surely have passed through his brain, it is problematical what became of it, unless he contrived to sift away the gold-dust and retain the rubbish. He lived by rule, every day walking his measured mile at the regulation pace, eating his dinner by the ounce, and drinking his tea by the minim; and on the least irregularity, due of course to some external cause, he turned slightly pale and consulted the doctor. His features were commonplace, but well under control, never twitched by mirth or drawn by pain; his grizzled locks smooth and always of the same length; his military moustache trimmed to a hair; his bearing orderly, slow, and sedate. An altogether uninteresting man, then, except as an experiment—to show how long a life may travel in the same sequestered groove before reaching the grave.

So far appearances, which of course are wholly unreliable. The real nature of the man must be allowed to develop itself by degrees; and I think it will be seen that the individual, even in this case, does not strike out for himself such a remarkably original rôle after all.

Indeed, so hard is it to get rid of "the trail of the serpent," that Priscian Prim was in his own quiet way continually haunted by a dream of wealth; it was his ambition to make a fortune at a single stroke. With this object in view, he had patented an invention that had been patented fifty years before—a singular mistake for such an

* Fastening a letter in the bark of a roadside tree is a very usual means among the shantymen of getting it posted, and I have heard them declare with pride that they never heard of one being lost.

orderly man, who paid for correction pretty dearly. Although he naturally disliked the rollicking ways of the sea, and seldom ventured upon it, he had an expensive idea that he could invent an astonishing screw-propeller, and all suggestions about the utility of a little experience were treated with silent contempt. His first failure was unfortunate certainly, but in less than a year he had invented another screw-propeller, of which the model, specifications, and drawings may still be seen in the Patent Office. Nobody would have anything to do with it; capitalists looked askew when Priscian Prim interviewed them on the subject; they liked money, but preferred making it their own way. At last he gave them up in despair, and cast his eye round for some easier road to wealth.

In one of his walks he happened to stroll along the beach of Derbyhaven Bay as far as Ronaldsway, when he came upon a layer of dark limestone rocks and what looked very like a seam of coal. He picked up a piece and examined it carefully; there could be no possible doubt about it: it was coal! Several Englishmen had made experimental borings in the neighbourhood, but in every case unsuccessfully. Stupid fellows! what they had sought with scientific care he had found by a lucky accident. Here was fortune ready to his hand; Priscian Prim grasped it. Whatever his faults, he knew how to hold his tongue; and, without saying a word to anybody, he purchased from the Government the right to bore for coal on the foreshore at Ronaldsway. This preliminary settled, he engaged a couple of men to sink a small shaft, and sat down to think how he would spend the money that would soon be pouring into his coffers.

He grew so absorbed in the fascinating dream that it soon appeared to be a reality. In truth, little though he knew it, a crisis had arrived upon the issue of which his career depended. Like glass dropped red-hot into water, his disposition might remain unchanged to the end, or a blow upon one particular spot might suddenly alter his whole nature. When the creeping plant lays its many arms around the oak, it often becomes part and parcel of the stronger tree; so it was with Priscian Prim, who had suffered his passion to clutch him firmly. It was wonderful how for a long time he contrived to hold "the even tenor of his way," though the struggle for self-control gradually became unendurable. That his serenity was due as much to the force of habit as to disposition is clear enough; for it was all he could do to restrain his excitement. Feeling the need of a change, he resolved to go for a few weeks to Ballasalla, which is just one mile from Castletown, and may be reached by train in three minutes, unless, as sometimes happens, a stray sheep blocks the line, and has to be pursued by guard and engine-driver and sportive passenger.

He took up his quarters at Rushen Abbey, which was an hotel in those days. It is a lovely, peaceful spot, lying apart from the picturesque little village and pervaded by a pleasant calm that is laden with memories of long ago. Surrounded by smiling cornland and meadow, it is situated in the midst of undulating hills, sweeping away to the purple heath-clad mountains of Cronk-ny-Irey-Lhaa and Barrule in the back-

ground. The Silverburn runs babbling past the very door, now tumbling over some mimic waterfall, and now speeding smoothly onwards under its fringe of willows, at the roots of which lies many a grand trout. At the back of the modern, square-built house are the ruins of the old Abbey—merely a few fragments of crumbling wall, covered with beautiful ferns and mosses, and the refectory and dormitory, and a sculptured tombstone of a Knight Templar; all embedded in fruit trees. In fact, the place is a factory of jam and pickles. Cabbages and raspberries grown upon abbots and monks! Here is an opportunity for a dozen moralists and scientists.

Priscian Prim lived as methodically at the Abbey as he had done at his lodgings in Castletown. The waiter always knew what he would have for breakfast, when he would want the paper, when his boots, when his slippers in the evening; no piece of machinery ever gave less trouble. You may wonder what manner of man this was who could go for his measured constitutional every day, and live the life of a squirrel in a cage, when his miners were digging and delving for the black diamonds that were to be his fortune; but one or two straws showed that there was a current beneath this unruffled surface. He was rather more irritable, more impatient, more absent, and perhaps more selfish; at any rate, this was the waiter's opinion, confided to the cook one morning when the bacon was not so nicely crisped as usual.

Possibly the man may have been right, for Priscian Prim looked worried, and, though he took his customary walk to Ronaldsway, he returned earlier than was his habit. After wandering aimlessly about the grounds for some time, he strolled as far as Crossag Bridge, which is perhaps the oldest structure of the kind in the kingdom. It has stout buttresses to resist the stream, and three arches, the centre one being pointed; and it is very steep, and so narrow (not seven feet in breadth) that only pack-horses or wheelbarrows could have passed over it. The masonry is remarkably strong and firm even now, though it is not impossible that it dates back to the eleventh century; for 1098 A.D. is supposed to be the year in which the Abbey was built, and the monks probably erected the bridge and the old mill opposite about the same time.

But Priscian Prim was no archaeologist. What did it matter to him whether the Abbey had been founded by Macmarus, or by Magnus Barefoot, or by "Olave Kleining"? The blue smoke curling into the air from the mill chimney was of far more interest; his thoughts were of coal. If he could not invent a screw-propeller that anybody would put into a ship, he could, at any rate, supply the means of driving screw-propellers. Delicious dream! he sat upon the wall of the bridge to revel in it.

Above the bridge is a pretty cascade; after which the streamlet trickles over a level bed of pebbles, deepest between grassy banks, fringed with willows and bracken. And just at the water's edge was a child playing with bucket and spade. A sweet little maid she was, with her soft brown face and ruddy pouting lips and flaxen hair and light blue eyes. Prettily dressed in pale blue and with an old-fashioned coal-scuttle bonnet and great dark blue bows, she looked quite a little

grandmother. Her ways were grave and sedate, and she kept talking to herself in the most earnest manner imaginable. Not afraid of rheumatism, however, for her feet must have been sadly wet, and there was no one to look after her. She was building a mimic bridge with a mimic waterfall, and planting stately ferns around it.

"Dear me, what a singular child!" said Priscian Prim. The way she plumped her little foot into a puddle made him quite ill, though she was such a curious phenomenon that he could not help watching her.

Presently an accident occurred. She contrived to get her legs entangled in her spade, and fell heavily upon the pebbles, her sweet face being strangely puckered until she had ascertained whether she was hurt. Then, seeing a spot of blood upon one of her chubby arms, she began to sob most pitifully.

"Don't cry; that won't mend matters," said Priscian Prim, who could afford to regard the accident with philosophic serenity.

As she was too busy sobbing to hear him, he walked down from the bridge and stood beside her; and, on looking up and seeing a stranger, her tears disappeared as if by magic, and she rose to her feet. He gazed at her wonderingly. What should he do? What should he say? I doubt whether he had spoken to a child in his life.

"How do 'ou do, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim?" said the little maid, sweeping him a grand curtsey quite in the dancing-mistress style.

If some one had dealt him a left-hander straight from the shoulder he could not have been more astonished. Not only did she know his name, but she was actually more at ease than he was. He was beginning to give his serious attention to this riddle when she went on, with a coquettish toss of the head—

"Oh, I know welly well 'ou doesn't care for ladies, so I won't ask you to stop, for I's better now, tank 'ou."

"Hem!" said Priscian Prim. He was about to pat her encouragingly on the head, but, on hearing this strange speech, he drew back his hand as suddenly as if each of the flaxen locks were a viper. Really he had never felt so disconcerted in all his life.

"Oh, 'ou needn't deny it," she continued, shaking a little finger warningly at him, "for I knows it's twne. Mona says 'ou's a woman-hater, and dat 'ou looks as if 'ou's just stepped out of a bandbox."

This was indeed a startling revelation.

"Who's Mona?" he gasped.

"Not know Mona—not know my kind sissie! Everybody knows Mona."

"And what's your name, little one?"

"Little one, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim! I's a big girl for my age, and everybody says so. I's Miss Bwada Mylrea, and I's stopping at de hotel."

"Good gracious! And Colonel Mylrea, of Ramsey, is your father?"

"'Es, of course. Hold this bwidge up for me; de stupid water is wunning over it, and it must be made to go under."

There was something so charming about the child, with her pretty face and her old-fashioned ways, that Priscian Prim did a very remarkable thing. After casting a careful look round to see

that the coast was clear, he spread his handkerchief upon the ground, knelt upon it, and held the stone as desired. True, he had an apprehensive, hang-dog expression, but even this wore away after a time, and he listened to the little maiden's artless prattle, and assisted her in her task with a zest that was quite new to him. Was this really the same Priscian Prim? you may ask. Yes, the very same man, only in a different setting.

"Brada, Brada!" cried a musical young voice.

Priscian Prim was himself in a moment.

"'Es, I's here, Mona, helping Mr.—"

In an agony of alarm, he laid his hand upon the child's mouth, and then crouched in the bracken. What would people think if they were to see him engaged in such childish folly? Surely they would set him down as a lunatic; and if this giddy girl were to catch but a glimpse of him in such a compromising position, there would be no end to the unpleasant giggling and pointing of fingers. So he crept up among a cluster of brambles.

"'On just come out of dat, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim," said that mischievous little monkey, shaking her head at him in a very serious way. "'A fine ting, indeed, for 'ou to wun away fwom a lady! Just come out of dat, I tell 'ou; I's going to intwodooce 'ou to Mona pwoperly."

Priscian Prim's face among the brambles was a picture. He looked like an old sheep caught by the horns.

CHAPTER II.

MONA MYLREA was an older counterpart of her little sister—just what you would imagine Brada to be at eighteen. The flaxen hair and light blue eyes a shade darker; the mouth merry and mischievous; the figure tall, shapely, and graceful. As if to heighten the resemblance, they were both dressed in the same colours; though Mona, having arrived at an age when the complexion becomes more precious, wore a large straw hat, somewhat of the Chinese mandarin fashion.

She was an undoubtedly pretty girl, as she stood on the river-bank with the ferny, mossy walls of the old Abbey behind her, and the golden sunlight falling in a flood around, and at her feet the glistening water singing as it ran seaward. But what was she laughing at? Not, surely, at that sweet little old-fashioned thing looking up at her; not at the pleasant landscape; her eyes were bent upon a cluster of brambles, not too dense to prevent any one's looking through it. Mona could plainly see the bent figure of a crouching man; and towards him Brada was now advancing in her own sedate way.

Really, Mr. Priscian Prim's position was very painful. That little imp, as he called Brada, had informed her sister that he was somewhere about, and he fancied that he could hear a nasty sound of laughter coming from the high ground above him. And now this dreadful child was walking straight towards his hiding-place! He made two or three frantic waves of the hand at her; and—yes, that certainly was a peal of laughter. Was ever man in such an awkward plight before?

Brada took him ceremoniously by the hand to lead him out; but he pushed her roughly away.

"Get out, you miserable little thing," said Priscian Prim, in a hoarse whisper.

But Brada only burst out laughing, for she saw Mona looking down at them; and, following the direction of her eyes, he was made aware of the full horror of his position.

His face was very red and his manner very sheepish when he came out of his hiding-place and approached Mona, who found it difficult to be as grave as she could wish. After Brada had solemnly introduced them, he said apologetically:

"I was playing with your sister, Miss Mylrea."

But Brada had too great a regard for the strict truth to allow this statement to pass.

"He was hiding from 'ou, Mona."

His face was scarlet as he explained:

"I mean that I was playing with her when I heard some one coming; but, of course, I didn't know it was you."

"I thought you never played, Mr. Prim," said Mona, with a mischievous glance at him.

"Oh, yes, I play—I play the piano—and—walk."

She smiled at this complete catalogue of his amusements.

"I suppose you've been for a long walk this morning."

"No, not very. The fact of the matter is, I had fish for breakfast; and you know, Miss Mylrea, it's a bad thing to walk far upon fish."

Brada looked at him in astonishment; but Mona kept her countenance tolerably well.

"Yes, of course, fish are more accustomed to swimming than walking," she said.

Was she chaffing him? he wondered. Surely no one would take such a liberty with Priscian Prim. Yet she was such a charming girl that he almost felt as if he should like her to poke a little pleasant fun at him—it would show she took an interest in him at any rate, and enable him to watch her while she talked. It was very odd; he had never felt like this before. There must certainly be something in her different to other girls. In order to set this question at rest, he took a sly peep at her out of the corners of his eyes. She had beautiful hair and eyes, a soft velvety skin, and, at the corner of the little rosebud of a month was a dimple. It must be the dimple—no other girl that he knew had a dimple. That must be—but his reflections broke off suddenly, for the object of so much attention caught him inspecting her curiously, and her smile sent every thought out of his head.

"Miss Mylrea," said he at the door of the hotel, and there was a desperate earnestness about him, "there is some very pretty scenery about here, and, if you would like some one to show it to you, please remember that I shall be only too glad."

The idea of his acting the affable showman to a fine landscape was ridiculous enough, but this is exactly what he would have done, measuring it off by the yard like so much tape, and parceling out trees, and mountains, and water, and ice-worn boulders as if they were penny-worths of groceries.

He saw in nature but a confused mass of shapes and colours, recalling no memories and suggesting no ideas—the grand old hills were silent and sightless, the rocks speechless, the flowers dumb and inanimate, everything a dreary, uninhabited wilderness, without a past history, or a future worth thinking of. Eminently prosaic then was

Mr. Priscian Prim, who, nevertheless, thought himself capable of pointing out the beauties of nature.

"But suppose you had had fish for breakfast, you wouldn't be able to walk, Mr. Prim," said Mona, with perfect gravity, and was gone before he could utter another word.

"And may I come?" asked Brada.

"Oh—yes," he replied, not over graciously.

So the little maid taught him another lesson in politeness. She said, "Tank 'ou, Mr. Pwician Pwim," shook hands with him, and walked in her own stately way up the steps, when she turned round and kissed the tips of her fingers to him. Then the coal-scuttle bonnet vanished after the mandarin hat, and Priscian Prim was left alone.

Yes, perhaps for the first time in his life, he realized that he was alone, though he had spent the greater part of the last ten years in solitary lodgings. Here was another paradox for him to puzzle out; but he could arrive at no definite conclusion except that the sun was not shining as brightly as a few minutes ago. He was sitting upon the famous "Abbot Stone of Rushen," the sculptured coffin-lid of the Knight Templar, and his finger was idly tracing the floriated cross and the sword alongside; and, when he gave up attempting to solve the mystery of his own feelings, he actually began to wonder who was lying underneath the stone. This was such a grave departure from his usual mood that something was clearly the matter with him; and perhaps he acted prudently, on going indoors, in examining his tongue by the aid of a looking-glass.

(To be continued.)

FLOWERS.

BY HARRIET KENDALL.

YE flowers that grow
In clusters on the woody mountain's side,
And mock the truant breezes as they chide
With murmurs low;

The rills that flow,
And picture heaven's serenest blue do watch
Ye blushing at your loveliness, and catch
The roseate glow.

Poets of earth!
Steeped in the essence of a purer world,
Ye speak a language words have ne'er unfurled,
Nor tongue given birth.

O witching flowers,
That shyly woo the tangled sunbeam's smile,
And with your subtle coquetry beguile
The summer hours,

Why do ye die
When tempests sweep along your sylvan bowers,
And leave us here, ye music-haunted flowers,
So lone, to sigh?

True types ye are
Of tender hopes that blossom for awhile,
Hopes which are radiant as a noonday's smile,
Yet grief doth mar.

And then they flee,
And like the sunset billows of an eve
In summer-time, they fade away,—but leave
A memory.

THE GROUSE.

TO the wealthier classes the twelfth of this holiday month, August, is about the most important day of the whole year, because then, as almanacks say, "Grouse shooting begins." This sport is distinctly a privilege of the wealthy, for though a great number of the middle classes can afford to visit Scotland, enjoys its scenery, and perhaps

Lure the speckled troutling from the mere,
And hook the strong-nosed salmon where he runs
Cleaving the adverse flood.

Only a very few comparatively can afford
with murtherous guns
To scour the moor, and chase the flying deer,

as becomes evident when it is told that every brace of grouse killed in Scotland costs the sportsman on the average very nearly a couple of guineas, while every stag brought down costs fully fifty pounds. But besides thus being the sport, grouse also is, as a food, confined to the upper classes, for who else would willingly give for them from ten to twenty shillings per brace, which weighs at most not more than half-a-dozen pounds. Grouse certainly is a dear bird to any one having an interest in it. To many Highland proprietors it has been little short of a godsend, for mountain lands, which as sheep-farms did not fetch them a groat per acre, now brings them in a rent equal to that paid by their tenant farmers for the best arable lands on these northern estates. The poulterer also finds that a good sale of grouse brings him in excellent profits, for if he makes early arrangements with the sportsmen he can generally succeed in buying them at a crown a brace, and the selling price we know, while in many a Highland clachan the advent of the sportsmen is the beginning of their annual harvest, and so this plain brown bird must be to many people highly interesting.

Its habitat is what Tennyson calls "the dreary, dreary moorland," and Scott "the land of brown heath;" but it eschews the "shaggy wood," for among trees it cannot exist, as it seems unable to fly except in a straight line, and so its home among the heather, on which it feeds, is surrounded by the bleakest of prospects, and when startled here it utters its harsh loud cries of *go-back, go-back, go-back*, and sails away with heavy whirring flight for several hundred yards further into its lonely home, which it leaves neither summer nor winter.

The grouse seems to be an exception to gallinaceous birds in general in that it pairs, and that very soon after St. Valentine's day, though the building of the nest is not begun till about the middle of May. The construction of nests is to them an easy affair, as a few dried pieces of deer's horn grass, and bents rudely arranged underneath a thick tuft of heather, or by the side of some sheltering boulder, is sufficient to satisfy them. Here, by the middle of May, nine or ten eggs are laid, and by the first week of June, if the weather in the interval has been good, as many "cheepers" are to be found. To these little cheepers their

parents pay every attention, and are scarcely to be moved off the nest for food or fear; indeed, keepers have been known to trample on them, so faithful are they, and so well aided in their concealment by the similarity of the colour of their feathers and that of the heather. When it does leave the nest it "flops" along the surface of the heather and returns to its charge as soon as the disturber has retired. This faithfulness continues during the whole season, for though the young birds are able to fly in two or three weeks after being hatched, and are quite strong on the wing by the end of July, they still abide by their parents, and the whole family thus forms what sportsmen call a "covey," which is considered very good if on the 12th of August it should number altogether—parents included—ten birds. But they seldom amount to so many, for notwithstanding the numerous measures passed by Parliament for the purpose of securing them protection during the whole year, and special quietness during the nesting season, and notwithstanding the vigilance of gamekeepers, the enemies of the grouse manage to do away with one or two out of every covey. Chief among these enemies are the stoat, weasel and hooded crow, which are especially fond of the eggs, and the kestrel, sparrow-hawk, merlin, and rough-legged buzzard, which are always on the watch for old or young; even the fox as he trots along is on the outlook for nests, and when he finds one he shows the poor cheepers scant mercy. But the most destructive of all its predaceous enemies are the hen harrier and the peregrine falcon, which hunt together. The hen harrier flies low and picks up for himself the birds that try to hide on the bare moor, while those that see him coming and attempt an escape by flight are struck on the wing by the high flying falcon, which knocks off the head and feasts on the body at its leisure.

The grouse are, however, subject to a mysterious disease which carries off a great many more than all the above enemies put together; in some years indeed, so deadly is it that scarce a bird is left on many of the largest and best moors. The cause of this disease is still a mystery, and is therefore of course the subject of much theorising, and the most contrary opinions are held by those who have every opportunity of knowing all about it; some asserting, with some show of evidence, that it arises from over protection and the destruction of the birds of prey, which in maintaining the beautiful balance of Nature would destroy the diseased and the weaklings, while others as positively assert that there is little use of birds of prey while guns are so numerous, and maintain that the disease is caused by the food the grouse is forced to eat during an open winter, as then the germs which, according to this theory, originate the disease have not been killed by hard frost, and therefore the grouse take them in with its food, which is the tender shoots of the growing heather. Though the weather cannot be commanded, the food supply to a great extent can be, and wise keepers see that some of the heather is annually burnt in stripes, so that the oldest and the newest are contiguous, and thus shelter from enemies and weather is always near. In winter the tufts of the old heather above the snow afford the necessary support.

When the long-looked-forward-to "Twelfth"

does come, and the masher dress of Piccadilly is exchanged for a shooting tunic and knickerbockers in some Glen tartan, the sportsman is out on the moors by break of day with keepers, dogs, ponies, &c. &c., and blazes away till driven home by the darkness, for certainly, if it be anything like an extensive moor, the local correspondent of some daily paper is sure to await his return, and next day his friends throughout the whole country know what his "bag" is. It must therefore be good, and if the moor be at all fairly stocked, it is good, as an old sportsman can on the twelfth bring down from sixty to ninety brace to his own gun. Indeed an old shot gets out of temper if he misses a bird that rises within range, but the young sportsman will probably find that during his first few days on the moors, it will be convenient to lay the blame of his bad shooting on some part of his shooting paraphernalia, and will probably after luncheon ask the keeper to have a shot that he may be spared the ignominy of coming home with an empty bag.

As the season advances the "bags" become less, because the birds become wilder and fewer, and by the middle of September the remnants of the coveys join company and form packs which are more difficult to get at, and the long walks in pursuit of the few to be got begin to be tedious, so that by the end of September the greater number of the sportsmen follow the swallow southwards, and get their keepers to send after them regular supplies till the season closes on the 10th of December.

A. POLSON.

ANECDOTES OF LEMAITRE.

I. A TELLING POINT.

ON one occasion, at the theatre of the Porte St. Martin in Paris, Frédéric Lemaitre was playing in the melodrama of *Trente Ans*, with Madame Dorval. The lady of course took the part of Amelie, and happened to wear a *tulle* bonnet of delicate make. In the third act, where she forces herself to make over her dowry to her gambling husband, Amelie, seizing the deed from Georges' hands, passes rapidly to a side-table to sign it; and Dorval, this evening going too near a light, set her fragile bonnet on fire.

Lemaitre, without a moment's hesitation, snatched the head-dress off, and crumpling it in his hands, put the extinguished remains in his pocket, and went on with his part. Some members of the press, however, observed the incident, and next morning loudly praised Lemaitre's presence of mind. A young actor from the provinces, who had come up to see how things theatrical were managed in Paris, chanced also to be present. And returning to the country theatre, of which he was the leading lover and first young man, he soon afterwards had an opportunity of essaying Georges in this same *Trente Ans*. And when he reached the signing scene, he passionately advanced towards Amelie, tore off her bonnet, and put it in his pocket.

Some astonishment, and indeed disturbance, were shown by the audience; and a local critic, meeting the actor afterwards in a café, inquired—

"Why on earth did you pull Amelie's bonnet off her head?"

"My good fellow," said the other, "you are sadly behindhand down in these parts. Why, that is one of Frédéric's most telling effects."

"Ah!" cried the critic, drawing in his horns; "really? I see. Upon my faith, it was a very striking point!"

II. TICKLISH TIMES.

THE émeutes, which took place in the streets of Paris in 1832, greatly alarmed the still scarcely-established Government of Louis Philippe. On the 6th of June, the King signed the *Ordinance*, by which Paris was declared in a state of siege. Frédéric Lemaitre, the great actor, relates in his *Souvenir* that he was then living as a bachelor (his family was in the country) at lodgings in the boulevard St. Martin, No. 8. Paul de Kock occupied the *entresol*; he died there subsequently, after having tenanted the same rooms for fifty years. They were at such a little height above the street, that when, after writing some pages of the romance in hand, Paul sat at the window beaming with good temper, his friends could almost shake hands with him, and could receive without difficulty the friendly invitation given indiscriminately to every one, "Come up to my little place at Romainville."

One of these evenings of outbreak, Lemaitre was sitting down to dinner at six o'clock with two of his friends, when a great clatter of horses' hoofs brought them flying to the window. A squadron of cavalry dashed by towards Porte-Saint-Denis, and then they observed some twenty of the national guards dragging along two wretched fellows in blouses, whom they proceeded to put to death against a wall. It is well known these shopkeeping soldiers, often half drunk, were at times brutal in the extreme. Exclamations could not be repressed, and the guards looking up and seeing three men gesticulating, fired twice at them. smashing a mirror to pieces in the front room. Our friends barricaded themselves as well as they could, and got their dinner as best might be at the back of the house. When it got dark, Provost, one of the guests, was too anxious about his belongings to stay, and crept out home through alleys and short cuts. But Lemaitre and his other friend thought prudence the best part of valour, and sat up all night in their secluded chamber playing at lotto. But the face of the younger victim, only some fifteen years old, whose death they had witnessed—his pale features—his disordered dress—as he sank on his knees to beg that life his murderers refused to grant—would not leave them.

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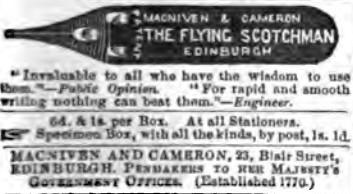
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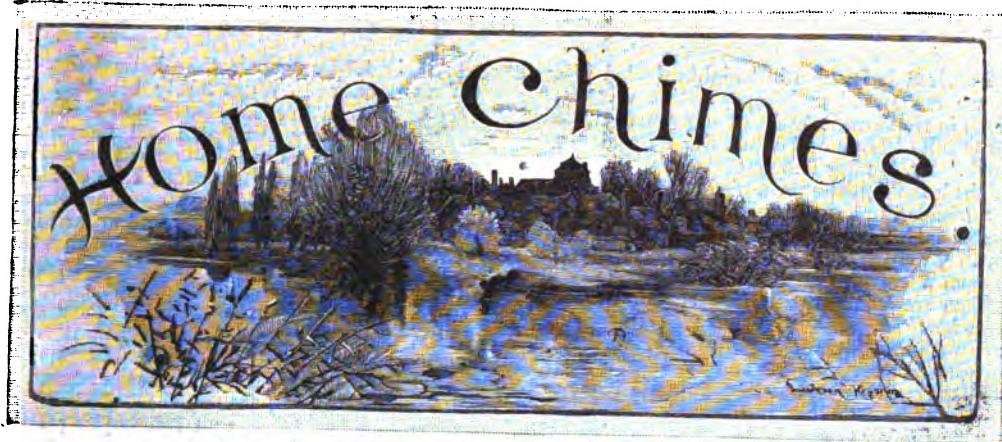


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[PRICE ONE PENNY

HETTY'S HERO.

BY ALISON.

Author of "Two Lovers—Two Loves," "A Heathen of the Day," "For Ever, For Ever," &c. &c.

"HETTY, make haste, Jack is getting horribly cross."

"Oh! dear," I cry in despair, and my face grows still hotter than my fuss and hurry, and anxiety, have made it. It is too bad of Isabel to give me so little time for dressing. She kept me in her room, showing me her gowns and bothering about which bonnet she should put on—as if it mattered what a married woman wore!—and I had to rush to my own room and scramble into my things anyhow, for the carriage is at the door, and I feel as if everything were crooked, and I cannot get my own bonnet fixed at that very particular shade of an angle that I had decided last night was the most becoming, and I shall look a fright, an awkward country girl, and it is my very first appearance on the stage of London society, and my face grows redder, and my brain whirls, and my hands become numb.

"Hetty, Hetty!" calls Isabel, and then she comes bustling into the room to make confusion worse confounded.

"Let me help you, dear. We really must be off or we shall get wretchedly placed. You and I don't care about the cricket, but Jack does and he will be ever so vexed if we don't look as if we cared and get a bad place. What is it? your gloves? Oh! any will do. Tan are nicest, only do be quick."

Mrs. Dudley looks provokingly cool and well dressed; she has had plenty of time and all the benefit of my valuable advice. She is only nineteen, but she is two years older than I am, and a matron of six months standing, and I am cross and contemptuous at the pains she has taken to look well, for she has won her prize in life's lottery, and secured her position, and I am just entered on the field, and have my destiny before me.

"There, darling," she says, handing me my

gloves, and my sunshade. "You look so pretty and as neat as a new pin. Come along. What now?" and a little pucker of impatience ruffles her smooth white brow. "Oh! your pocket handkerchief," as I snatch one hurriedly. "Now you are ready."

I follow my chaperone to the carriage, horribly conscious of a flushed face, a strand of hair pulling painfully at its roots, a misplaced hairpin, an uncertainty as to the exact position of my bonnet, and the becoming combing of my fringe. I feel very cross, and I hate Isabel and Mr. Dudley, and Lord's and cricket, and London, and I wish I had never been persuaded to leave my quiet country home, where at least one had time to dress.

Time to dress! I should think we had. For each of the dissipations of Hellistone, we might have spent three weeks or a month in dressing, and still had time to spare. Except for the week I spent at Brightleigh, when I went to Isabel Wyclif's wedding, I had never had a glimpse of gaiety in my life; real, stirring gaiety, not the dull round of tennis, picnics and small evening parties that bore the name of gaiety at Hellistone.

Isabel Wyclif and I had been at school together at Carlisle. We were dear old friends—the friendship dating from quite two years ago—and when she left me, quite forlorn, bereaved and desolate, it was with earnest promises on both sides that as soon as I had done with school, I should go to stay with her at Brightleigh, two hundred miles away from Hellistone, and eventually, that whichever should marry first should have the other for a bridesmaid. Isabel had a whole term's length advantage. Still, it was the most wonderful surprise when I had a letter from her to tell me that she was engaged already, and that my first visit to her must be paid at her new London house, for Mr. Dudley was in a great hurry and they were to be married in three months, and of course I must be one of her eight bridesmaids, but that would not count as the promised visit for it would be all fuss and confusion, and of course she would leave Brightleigh before I should.

I arrived in London last night; Isabel pleased to see me, proud and happy. She was sitting alone in the dearest little sitting-room, crammed quite full of brass and china, flowers and needle-work. Mr. Dudley had gone to his club that he might leave us alone for a nice long chat.

"I have three engagements for this evening," Isabel said, "but I don't mind giving them up for they were at stupid big houses, and where there is such a crowd, one is never missed. You very seldom see your hostess at all; you cannot get near her."

I was in a whirl of delightful awe. I had read novels and society papers and knew of these great brilliant gatherings, but that I should come to be part of them I had never dreamed.

"How gay you are, Isabel," I said, rather sadly, for I felt as if I had got a good deal out of my depth. "I had no idea you had made such a 'brilliant alliance,' as the papers say, you seemed just to have married for love."

"So I did, you little goose," said the bride, laughing, but rather patronizingly; "we always vowed, you know, that we never would marry without having the romance of it, and I am sure my marriage was romantic enough. Jack fell in love with me at a ball and we were engaged in three weeks. We certainly met with no opposition to make more romance, but you would not have had me refuse him just because he happened to be rich. You know, it would not be really nice to marry a poor man whom all one's people objected to. The Lord of Burleigh's wedding would not have been romantic at all if he had been really a landscape painter—he would have been only a very sensible match for Miss Hoggins. He was romantic because he was a lord and owned parks and woodlands shady and Burleigh House by Stamford town."

"Then you did not know Mr. Dudley was rich until you were married?" I asked, in eager hope that our romantic ideal has been fully realized.

"Of course I knew all about him," laughed Isabel, "but when one falls headlong in love, one doesn't wait to think of such things. Wait till your turn comes and you will find it quite possible to be romantically in love with a man who can do a little more than feed you upon mere bread and cheese."

"I shall never have a turn," I protest, blushing hotly, not by any means at the unfamiliarity of the idea and the lightness with which the sacred topic is handled, but from guilty consciousness of the very familiarity of it, and remembrance of the pictures that my own imagination and my sisters' have painted of the triumphs that must attend a maiden on her first visit to London.

And now we are on our way to Lord's in Isabel's pretty new carriage, where we are to witness the University cricket match. I do not take the least interest in cricket. I never had any brothers, and I have no idea what is being "in" and what is being "out." Fielding and like terms are mysteries to me utterly beyond fathoming; but I am going to see the world, and my heart beats joyously in anticipation, and I have forgotten my impatience and my uncertainty about my bonnet, and even the refractory hairpin that has probably dropped out.

"You are looking so nice, Hetty," Isabel whispers, as we drive upon the ground. "How am I looking?"

"All right," I answer, rather distractedly.

What a crowd! What lovely bonnets! My heart sinks when I see how far beyond the modest achievement of my own taste and fingers that surmounts my locks are the bonnets turned out by Brown and Elise. How could I be so foolish as to imagine I should be even seen in London? And they all have their hair combed up, and mine lies on the nape of my neck in a loose knot that until to-day I thought soft, and fair, and pretty! All the carriages are full of bright girls, and youths in mighty collars stand at their doors talking, and they are all eating—yes, it is one immense picnic! I should forget most completely that cricket is going on within a dozen miles, were it not for Jack Dudley teasing about the bad place our carriage has taken, and interrupting Isabel and me while we discuss the bonnets and gowns, and wonder who the people are, with tiresome and unsolicited information as to who is in and who is out, and what so-and-so has scored. He is my host; I am obliged to give some show of attention to his remarks. I think Isabel might take the burden from my shoulders entirely; for she is his wife, and Lord's is not so new to her as it is to me, but somebody—an uninteresting, elderly man—comes up to her side of the carriage and engages her attention, and leaves me entirely to Mr. Dudley and his incomprehensible information, and his insane enthusiasm when Oxford makes a big score.

It is very hot and I am very tired, and I am beginning to feel very much out of it, having fully realized how badly dressed I am, and how plain I must look amongst all those beautiful, radiant girls, though at Hellistone I was thought rather nice looking; and, worst of all, how neglected, how wallflowerish I must look, with no one to talk to me but a middle-aged married man (for Mr. Dudley must be at least thirty; it was shocking for Isabel to throw herself away in such a prosaic fashion!), when suddenly I see that I have become an object of interest to a tall, fair man a few carriages off—interest of what sort I do not for a moment decide, whether it is curiosity or admiration, for a horrible thing happens—a black that seems to me to be as big as sixpence has settled upon my nose.

I find my pocket-handkerchief with some difficulty: alas! between annoyance and hurry and consciousness of the interested—I fear, the amused—eyes, my face grows as hot as it was an hour ago. I rub off the black, not daring to glance in the direction of the eyes; then, oh! horror, I drop my pocket-handkerchief over the edge of the carriage.

Mr. Dudley is standing with his back to me, watching the cricket through a field-glass. I look wildly round; I cannot see where the handkerchief has fallen, the crowd is so thick. I turn to Isabel, but she will not look, she is so busy with her elderly admirer. I look back over the carriage; I cannot see the handkerchief, but I do see the man who was so much amused by the black on my nose; he has just passed us, and is making his way slowly through the crowd.

It is very inconvenient to be without a pocket-handkerchief on a hot summer's day, when the heavens are like brass and the midges are buzzing and biting, and one has nothing to do but think of them for a distraction. I try to amuse myself

by wondering who the fair man was who looked so interested in me, and why he was interested—was it only the black on my nose that fascinated him? and where is he now? and shall I ever—?

I almost start perceptibly. It must be magnetic attraction, the beginning of a romance! Turning my head quite accidentally to the left, I meet his eyes again. I am quite sure there is not a black on my nose now. Can the romance of my life be opening?

He is very handsome, tall, fair, distingué; very different from Jack Dudley, who is short and almost squat and very dark. Isabel has made a prosaic marriage; all the girls thought so when she sent us his photograph, and that flattered him on the whole as it kept his height a secret. I am sure they would be satisfied with such a hero of romance as this fair-haired unknown.

It is too bad of Isabel to insist upon driving home just when I am beginning to enjoy myself. I am a little consoled by the prospect that we are going to the Italian Opera in the evening, and also I shall have at least the pleasure of imparting my pleasure to the eager ones at Hellistone. There is nearly an hour before I need dress for dinner. Isabel goes to lie down and I go to my room and get out my writing things and proceed to write my first real letter home; last night I sent them only a line to assure them that I had neither been smashed up on the line, or inveigled into a den of thieves and murderers on my arrival at St. Pancras, as Emmy, who is nervous and too much given to Wilkie Collins, pleasantly prophesied would happen.

"My dearest Milly," I begin—Millicent is number three of us; Polly is our eldest, and I addressed that short missive to her last night; I am number two; and Emmy is number four. Four Miss Stonors of Hellistone Lodge, Northshire, daughters of Captain Stonor, once of the Royal Navy, now doing his best to live upon half-pay and our dead mother's small fortune, and to keep us in food and clothing until such time as some four disinterested young men will come forward to relieve him of the burden, and feed and clothe us instead.

When I have written so much, I stop. Reduced to written words, how very small my romance becomes: like a cremated cow, that can be carried with ease in a waistcoat pocket. Can I say, "I was at Lord's to-day, and I saw a very handsome fair man (of course the description would come in here and lengthen the narrative), who looked at me several times." They will laugh at me, and Polly will think me ridiculously vain. If I say more than the naked truth, or at least clothe the naked truth in picturesque garments, shall I not raise hopes unduly in three affectionate hearts? And then—I know how ready they are to jump to conclusions—how small I shall feel if nothing more happens, and how disappointed they will all be! At least, I will wait until we have come from the opera. Who knows what may happen in this wonderful, adventurous London? I put away my paper and pen, and look out my small stock of finery for the evening.

Alas! the opera-house is so big and so crowded, and the crowd is so bewildering, that I do not know whether the unknown is there or not, and the proceedings on the stage are so distracting,

one cannot help looking at them sometimes. He is not here. I am quite certain he is at the Hay-market. I felt convinced that he would be at the Haymarket before we came here. The very theatre, I am sure, I wanted most to go to, only Isabel, who pretends to be musical, had stalls taken for the opera. It is very dull to sit hours and hours in a huge theatre, where you do not see a single face you know, with a companion, who pretends to be so much absorbed by the stage that she has no attention to give to you, and when the performance is in a language of which you do not understand a word. The music may be fine, but I am out of tune, and my impatient ears turn all the melody into discord.

But after all, I am not to be disappointed. As we come out of the theatre, Jack Dudley escorting me, and Isabel before us with a man who joined us as we left our stalls, I see him. He does not see me. He is with a lady, beautiful and bright with diamonds. You may think me quite imbecile, but a sharp twinge of jealousy grips my heart.

"Is it some one you know?" Mr. Dudley asks, feeling how I jump in my surprise.

"No; who is that lady there, in white, with a star in her hair?" I ask hurriedly.

But there are so many ladies answering more or less to my vague description, that the right one and her companion have vanished before Jack has discovered them—not before, oh! joy quite unexpected, he has seen me. Perhaps my up-raised eager face has caught his eye. He turns—it must be my imagination, I think a moment after, but he certainly seems to recognize me; I even thought he started too. Then a carriage is called—I do not catch the name, but it is hers or theirs, and they hurry out into the gas-lit night outside.

II.

"And now comes the really important question. We know you are not engaged as you ought to have been with your opportunities. Emmy would have made more of them, even at her tender age; but we will not upbraid you until we have heard the whole of your defence. We are afraid you have not even had an offer, for I am sure you could not have kept it to yourself. Besides, even you would not have been so wicked as to refuse it. Did any one fall in love with you?"

It is Milly who speaks, lying on her back in the hay-field behind our cottage. Emmy and I have sunk luxuriously into the scented depths of one hay-cock; Polly is sitting up against another mending her gloves; and a broad-leaved horse-chestnut spreads a sheltering canopy between our heads and the hot morning sun of July.

"How can she know they were in love if they did not tell her so?" says Polly, somewhat bitterly, as she remembers a little mistake or two of her own.

"Some one did!" cries Emmy, starting up. "She is as red as a poppy."

"No, they didn't," I say confusedly. "It was only something—" then I stop, hotter than ever.

"Something!" they all cry. "And you never told us. Go on—be quick."

"It was nothing," I say; "only a little adventure—at least I thought it was going to be one and it wasn't. But it was very odd."

"Hetty, for goodness sake tell us what was odd. It is too hot to put thumb-screws on your fingers," says Milly.

"You will be awfully disappointed," I say coolly. "It was only that some one—he really was *awfully* handsome" (I begin to warm up again) "seemed to take quite an interest in me. We got to know each other by sight, you know—"

"And never were introduced?"

"Oh! no," I sigh. "You see, Isabel is very comfortably married, but I think he is in quite a different set. She only knows one man with a title, and he is a mere baronet. Now he—my He—looks quite like a marquis or a colonel of the Guards."

"Why didn't you ask who he was?"

"I didn't like pointing him out to Isabel lest he saw."

"He must have been watching you pretty closely," says Polly. "Now, where did you see him first?"

"At Lord's; at the University match. I got a black on my nose—"

"Oh! Hetty," they cry in reproachful unison.

"I rubbed it off, and then I dropped my handkerchief—"

"And he picked it up?" Emmy interrupts eagerly.

"I don't think so," I answer slowly, taking in this new light. "Perhaps he did. I did not find it again, and he certainly passed the carriage just at the time. I wonder if he did."

"I hope it was one of your best ones," says Polly, anxiously, "You are so careless, Hetty. Do you think it was a nice one?"

"I don't know," I answer thoughtfully. "I caught it up in a hurry. You will know by the washing-book."

"Well, he looked at you at Lord's," Milly goes on, impatiently, like a counsel examining a stupid witness. "And how often did you see him again?"

"I saw him five times," I answer. "Once at Lord's, once coming out of the opera-house, twice in the park, once at Henley regatta. There was once at the Lyceum, but I don't think he saw me."

"And he always looked at you as if he admired you!"

"Well, I fancied he did," I answer, laughing, "but it may have been vanity, or he may have thought me odd-looking, or I may always have had blacks on my nose."

"No, it wasn't," says Milly emphatically. "You know he was passionately in love with you, else why did you hide it from us? It is most provoking that you did not manage better. I blame Isabel Dudley very much. She was responsible for you, and she ought to have brought it about. It is simply nonsense to say she did not know him—she ought to have made it her business to know him, and you ought to have given her a hint of how things were. Now, we must see what we can do."

"We don't even know his name," we all cry.

"What's in a name?" says Milly, undauntedly if irrelevantly. "He knows your name, and he will never rest till he finds you out."

Alas! Milly measures matters according to her very limited powers. The world is much bigger than Hellstone, and it is so full of such lovely, brilliant women with whom men like him mingle freely, but at which such as I must gaze from afar. No, no, my unknown and I will never meet again. To each other from henceforth we shall only be passing faces in a crowd.

"We have *some* clue to him," says Polly, summing up evidence. "According to Hetty, he is about twenty-five, in the army, and a nobleman. What a delightful coincidence if he should come to the castle with Lord Vansittart for the shooting."

This idea takes hold of us all. The castle is an ancient tower that stands on a hill-side frowning over Hellstone and the adjacent neighbourhood. It is never inhabited except for the month of August. Lord Vansittart, an elderly widower, coming there invariably when released from his duties in the House of Lords, and leaving in time to shoot his Southshire partridges in September. He always brings men with him whose guns we occasionally hear, but whose faces we very rarely see. This year Emmy feels convinced it will be otherwise.

We do not know the great Lord Vansittart, but we are on intimate terms with Mrs. Prynne, his housekeeper. Up the moors to the castle is one of our favourite walks, and we usually go in for rest, refreshment, and gossip. On the seventh of August we wend our way thitherward. Mrs. Prynne is always glad to see us, even in the whirl of preparation for his lordship, and she likes telling us who is coming and all about them.

We are welcomed as usual with open arms.

"Sit down, sit down," says Mrs. Prynne, bustling about to find us chairs in her pleasant parlour that looks upon the quadrangle. "The strawberries are done, but I'll send Jane out for some gooseberries. Miss Emmeline likes gooseberries. And how are you all? and how is the Captain? You must excuse this place being untidy, Miss Stonor, we are getting ready for his lordship; he comes on Monday."

"That will make you very busy. I suppose he generally brings friends with him," says Polly, innocently.

"Yes, always," is the unsuspecting answer, "I have to get rooms ready for five gentlemen; his lordship's brother-in-law, Lord Sunnibank is coming for one."

We have seen Lord Sunnibank, and do not feel interested in him. He is married, too.

"Any one else, Mrs. Prynne?" asks Milly.

"Nobody new, except Lord Ernest Mowbray, and young Mr. Winstanley, Lord Sunnibank's son, quite a young gentleman. The others are Mr. Castleby and Sir Thomas Irwin, who come nearly every year."

We pass over Master Winstanley, as we call him in private. He was at Eton the other day, and has probably not so much as matriculated at Christ Church. At Lord Ernest Mowbray's name we prick up our ears. Mrs. Prynne has never seen him, but the head housemaid, who was under-housemaid at Vansittart House, knows him. He is in the Guards, and very handsome, young, and unmarried.

The evidence is small, but we leave the castle tolerably satisfied: it *may* be he! The evidence is quite sufficient for my sisters, who are determined

that, with or without more evidence, it shall be he. I am the least sanguine; until the following morning, when a letter arrives from my great aunt, Mrs. James Stonor of Dullbury, who is my godmother, and who wishes me to go as soon as possible to spend a fortnight or three weeks with her in the odious provincial town, where she goes on living, simply because her husband was Vicar of Dullbury half a century or so ago.

She has money of her own and no children, and from accepting an invitation of hers there is simply no appeal; my father would not permit it for a moment. Polly went last time. I offer to give up my turn, as I have just been to London, and let Milly have the delightful opportunity, but our father is as firm as the nether millstone, and insists that Mrs. Stonor's wish shall be obeyed in the spirit and in the letter.

Now, I am quite convinced that Lord Ernest Mowbray, and the Unknown, are one and the same person. It is a baseless conviction, I admit, but it grows exceedingly strong, and makes me more unwilling than ever to leave pretty Hellistone for ugly Dullbury.

"The idea of having to go in August!" I lament.

"Well, you are not going for ever," says Milly, consolingly, "Most likely he will be here when you come back, and we promise you that if he is Ernest—I mean, if he is your young man—we will do everything we can for you, and if you are snapped up by one of the Dullbury iron and coal people, we will all dry his eyes—with your pocket-handkerchief."

"Iron and coal!" I repeat contemptuously. "My ideal knight, my Lord of Burleigh, my noble thinker, lover, doer," can be no iron or coal person. His blood must be as blue as the Plantagenet fluid—that goes without saying. No—poverty I will dare—I should rather like it, for riches are usually vulgar, but birth and beauty I insist upon!

"You will look out for him?" I whisper eagerly from the window of the railway carriage as the three of them stand waiting till I shall be borne away.

How pretty they and Hellistone look! They in their fresh cotton morning-gowns, their simple straw hats, and the bits of honeysuckle and sprays of bluebell, they have gathered on the way, stuck in their buttonholes or held in their hands, for we always walk primitively to the station, and the boy wheels our luggage behind us on a barrow. The trees are all heavy and dark in their mid-summer silence. The lilles lift their white flags in all the gardens; the castle stands grey and grave against the warm purple hills. Romance and idyllic poetry I leave behind me for the world of dust and prose; of iron and coal.

It is a long hot journey, and I reach Dullbury almost tearful from exhaustion. My aunt is not waiting to meet me—she never does meet us, and I remember now that the maid who used to receive us on the Dullbury platform is married, and I do not know the new one by sight.

I look impatiently around: it is too bad—

My angry thoughts receive a sudden check. Am I sleeping or awake? Do such things happen in real life? Are there fairies and magicians about, or has Emmy—have the three united wills of my sisters brought him here by magnetism? or is he a delusion, a vision, a ghost?

There before me, watching me with the same eager interest as when I saw him in London, stands my hero—my Lord Ernest—my fairy prince: not his double, because I recognize him mainly by the way in which he scans me, and if there were such a coincidence as that two men could be so exactly alike, the coincidence would hardly be borne out so far as that they should both take such a flattering interest in me. If he were a ghost, an illusion, would he not appear dressed as I saw him in London, not in unghostly grey knickerbockers.

Then my aunt's new maid finds me out. I can hardly speak to her, my heart is in such a delightful flutter; I quite forget to inquire after my aunt. I nearly lose my luggage, it is so difficult to chain my eyes to the van, and not take peeps round to see where my hero of romance is. He must be on his way to the moors—perhaps to Vansittart Tower! He will vanish as suddenly as he appeared, but I feel as confident as Emmy that I shall see him again. I do see him as we leave the station. How handsome, how patrician he looks! How like a Lord Ernest Mowbray. A servant comes up to him, touching his hat with servile deference. No doubt he is a great feudal lord before whom his subjects tremble—not Lord Ernest, therefore, but Lord Ernest's elder brother: a marquis, not a duke, I hope, for I feel convinced that a duke would be game too high for me to fly at, but a marquis sounds a little more modest. I was at school with a girl whose cousin married a marquis, so why should not I? My mother's grandfather was a viscount: I am not altogether without a stream of blue blood in my veins.

What an ugly town Dullbury is! How unworthy to be even a temporary resting-place for the sole of his lordly foot. How ugly, and new, and staring my aunt's house is! How shall I get through the terrible fortnight of my penance.

My aunt is very glad to see me. "You are quite grown up now, Hetty," she says; "and I hear you have been in London. We must let you see a little more of the world while you are here than you did in your schoolroom days. You are almost old enough to marry: the sooner the better when there are four of you, and you have so few opportunities. I have promised to take you to a garden party to-morrow at Mrs. Appleby's; they are very rich people, and have rich young men about them; and I need not say that you girls must all look out for money."

I shudder inwardly at the coarseness of my aged relative. It is shocking to see one tottering on the verge of the grave so disgustingly alive to the value of mere money. I will not go to the Appleby's; they are people who smell of money, and all their friends are the same—vulgar upstarts who do not even know how to pronounce their words.

"If Mr. Henderson, of Milton Park, were to be there, what a match he would be for you," my aunt goes on meditatively while we are at tea. "He has made an immense fortune lately out of coalpits; his father was quite a street Arab, but he made a great deal of money by importing tinned meats, and the son carried on the business for some years. I own it is vulgar; but he is asked out to a great many nice houses now, because he is so very rich. Everything is for money now-a-days. Birth is nothing."

III.

WITH my nose, figuratively, in the air, and all my nerves shuddering with disgust at the prospect of plebeian contact, my ears shrinking in fear of dropped h's and provincial twang, I follow my aunt into the blazing, flaring, scorching garden of Villa Appleby. The geometrical arrangements of geranium and calceolaria make me wince; the odour of strong perfumes and the rustle of rich silk make me wince. We Stonors have always prided ourselves on our true patrician instinct; we can detect Brummagem at a glance, or less than a glance—we can feel it in the air—we are as sensitive as sea anemones, and draw ourselves together at the faintest approach of vulgarity. The princess who slept upon the pea was not more highly organised than we are.

Aunt Stonor ought to be as refined of feeling as we are, for she is a Charteris by birth, and she ought ought also to have some proper respect for the name that is hers by marriage. I suppose a woman gets hardened by constant contact with vulgarity, when her husband is the vicar of a large manufacturing town. She looks like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout at this *roturier* gathering. What a vulgar old woman Mrs. Appleby is, and what a set of people! I am insulted, indignant. Why did I allow myself to be brought here?

"Mrs. Appleby knows some really good people," my aunt said, as we came, "her husband has a good deal of weight in elections, so the county families take them up whenever there are rumours of a dissolution in the air."

All I can say is, that if there are any county families here, they have suffered by contact, for all the women look much of a muchness. The men are, some of them, better, for there is a garrison ten miles from Dullbury, and officers are rarely fastidious when a good table and cellar are offered them. But I will not make the best of things; I am in a horribly bad temper, and don't care one bit how I spoil my appearance by looking cross.

It is the eleventh of August. How sweet and cool and green the woods of Hellistone will be looking; how quiet and peaceful and lonely the moors! To-morrow guns will be popping all over them. At this very moment Lord Ernest may be arriving at the Castle, or if he were on his way yesterday, and if he were he—he is perhaps sauntering down Hellistone village, or calling quite accidentally on my father with Lord Vansittart, who never called in his life, but who may have some mysterious business, such as men often have, on which he wants to consult my father, and he may invite him to shoot; and they will all get so intimate, and Lord Ernest will fall in love with Milly, our beauty—and I am here!

"William Henderson is here," my aunt whispers excitedly. "Julia Appleby told me. You look tired and hot, Hetty. Do come into this corner and have some tea. It will freshen you up."

To be freshened up for a William Henderson! —for a man who has money in his pockets made by tinned mutton and coalpits!—a man who on a hot day like this will have a red, round, shiny face, will be clad in loud checks, have a bunch of many-hued flowers in his button-hole, drop his h's or get them all mixed up.

A young Appleby finds a chair by the tea-table for my aunt, but there is not one for me.

"There will be one across the lawn, if you don't mind walking so far, Miss Stonor?" he suggests.

He is very young—not more than seventeen—quite impracticable for match-making, and I feel that beside my aunt to-day there is no safety for me. She will introduce that odious Henderson man to me, and insist upon marrying me to him then and there if I don't get out of her sight. So I allow Master Appleby to conduct me to a table under a distant lime-tree, where ices are slowly melting into pink pools, promising my aunt to return directly, like a clerk leaving his office for the day.

"It's awfully hot," says Master Appleby.

"Awfully," I respond; and then there is silence.

Master Appleby finds me a chair, and goes to fetch me an ice. He has just left me when three men go past together at a little distance—men of a different stamp, I think, from Master Appleby and his kind; officers from Castleby, of course. They pause for a moment to look at the little pond of gold fish on the lawn; as they go on, one of them turns his face in my direction. I am literally stricken dumb and motionless. It is Lord Ernest!

What can have brought him here—him so far above the vulgar herd gathered on the Appleby's lawn—away from his grouse and his great world? A wild hope flashes into my mind—so wild that only my youth and inexperience can excuse it. He has found out where I am staying; he has bribed the servants; he has heard that we were coming here; he has manœuvred and got himself invited, or perhaps come uninvited. Mrs. Appleby would be glad enough to get a lord anyhow, and would waive ceremony. Oh, blessed, blessed Dullbury! Destiny has led me hither.

He has seen me; he has passed on. A blank feeling comes over me; yet, of course, he could not have spoken to me, we have never been introduced. I sit in a dream. When Master Appleby brings the ice, I start as if he were offering me a dagger or a poisoned bowl. I eat the ice in wild impatience to be off and away; but where? I cannot follow him about the garden. He knows where I am; he must come to find me.

But Master Appleby is as inexorable as any policeman in bidding me move on; he feels himself responsible for me, and wishes to entertain me. He introduces two or three men to me. I find myself now and then within sight of Lord Ernest. Aunt Stonor picks me up from time to time. The day drags wearily on.

Then a crisis comes. I am sitting in the shadow of the house, which looks so white and glaring you would think shadow could not possibly be associated with it, only its very size and solidity compel it. There is a group of statuary, some shrubs, and an open window behind me; but a little to the right, through a space in the sculpture, just under a classical arm, and then through another space in the foliage, I can see who is at the window without being seen. My aunt is on my left, and is absorbed in listening to the band and in watching the costumes.

Suddenly I hear my own name. Of course I look up through the friendly peepholes. It is he; at least he is standing near the window, and one

of the officers to whom I have recently been talking is speaking. "Come, and I'll introduce you to little Miss Stonor, the jolliest little girl here."

I hear the answer; I hear it perfectly, distinctly. The band is playing close at hand, the air is full of unmodulated *bourgeoisie* conversation, but I hear nothing but the words spoken by that soft drawling voice, the voice I have never heard until now.

"Thanks; no. Much too hot to go through another ceremony of the kind. Jolly little girls are not much in my line, you know."

I am not mistaken; it is not a dream, though there is a curious mist of darkness and silence all about. By-and-by I hear the band play "Carmen;" then my aunt speaks, and it seems as if it must be hours since I heard that other voice.

"There are the Fowlers, Hetty; very nice people. I should like you to know them. Come and let us go over the lawn."

So my romance is ended—ended with something so awful that murder or desertion would be mere trifling in comparison. What will the girls say? But they will never, never know. Torture shall not tear the secret from me.

And in an agony of bitter self-contempt for my foolish vanity, and a fury of indignation that this lordling (as in my wrath I dub him) should despise a Stonor, while he does not disdain to eat the ices and drink the champagne-cup of an Appleby, I follow my aunt. After talking for a few minutes to the Fowlers, she says good-bye to Mrs. Appleby. She is the grandest lady present, and must set the example of going.

Just as we reach the gate, I see him—no longer my hero, my knight—coming quickly towards us in spite of the heat! Perhaps he has changed his mind; well, it is my turn now. I jump into the carriage after my aunt, and we drive away; and through the deep lace flounce of my sunshade I see him watching our retreating forms with something like disappointment on his noble visage.

IV.

DULLBURY, though a big, ugly town, has fields lying close about it just like the fields in the real country. I can see them in the distance as we drive from Villa Appleby to my aunt's house in the opposite suburb of the town, which rejoices in the name of Talkin Lodge, and my country-born soul cries out for the sympathy of their quiet green solitudes, that I may nurse my deeply-wounded pride amongst them. We are very tired, my aunt and I. When we have dined, she lies down on the drawing-room sofa, and I fetch my hat and go out for a walk.

I never think of asking for leave, or whether it is proper to walk out alone beside a town in the evening; the girls and I have always gone out where and when we pleased. The fields are only three minutes' walk from the house, and it is only seven o'clock; I shall have nearly two quiet, soothing twilight hours all to myself.

The fields are very quiet, even lonely; and here and there there are big trees in the hedgerows that cast black gloom all round them. I walk on, meeting now and then a couple of lovers or a party of small boys in search of unripe blackberries. Before me is the country, behind me the

town, which I do not look at because I want to feel as if I were miles and miles away from it, but the presence of which, so near and unseen like a guardian angel, gives a pleasant sense of security, for I do not like the look of a tramp whom I have passed sitting in a field. I like his look so little that, as evening shadows are gathering deeper and I must turn back, I dare not go through that field again. I look for the spire of a curiously fantastic congregational church that is close to my aunt's house. With that landmark well in view I can afford to make a slight detour and return to Talkin Lodge by fresh fields and pastures new.

I get over a stile—a real country stile—and find myself in a very large field that loses itself in one corner under a clump of trees. In the dimness I think I can make out a grazing cow; but country girls are not afraid of cows, and I go on, thinking of nothing but the shame of this afternoon. At the other side the only visible way to get out is over a high fence.

I am quite used to fences, though I do not usually climb them in a black grenadine dress with manifold puffings and frillings; and the apology for a railing is covered with a withered branch of thorn, all twigs and straggling branchlets. I stop, I gather my gown well and tightly up, I look round to see if anybody is about who can scoff at my ankles, and I see that there has emerged from the shadow no cow, but a real live *bull*, who is calmly regarding me at the distance of about three average tennis courts' length—I never can measure distance in feet.

I am not afraid of cows, and I am not much afraid of climbing a fence even in a long grenadine gown, but I am awfully afraid of bulls; and, paralyzed by terror and the hampering consciousness of my grenadine puffs and flounces, I look blankly at the prospect, when I see a man coming to meet me along the field that is my harbour of refuge. Now I shall be saved.

Alas! no. It is from Scylla to Charybdis, indeed, for the coming man is no other than my whilom hero, the man I have been thinking of all this evening, the man who declined the honour of an introduction to me, the man I really was silly enough to think had fallen in love with me, the man whom I have been sillier still *almost* to fall in love with!

He comes up to me as I stand hesitating before the fence; in the twilight I can see the glad recognition in his eyes, following upon a sudden surprise. Then he sees the bull; and then he looks at me again, with a sort of shyness in his eyes. What beautiful, kind eyes they look in the twilight.

The bull, seeing some one else coming, begins to think it is time he should make his presence more distinctly to be recognized. Lord Ernest pauses a moment, then he says—

"I think it will be better if I stay on this side and help you over; you can easily scramble up, I will lift you down."

"Thanks; I can—I prefer—" I stammer, though I am trying to speak haughtily and repellingly. I put my foot on the bottom rail and pause.

"Come—make haste," he cries impetuously, holding out his hand.

In spite of my terror, knowing the bull is

coming, I hold back and say, "Pray allow me to get over by myself." I feel as if I would rather be tossed on a thousand horns than touch that proffered hand, and I stand still.

He actually laughs. He says, "You are too ceremonious. You really must let me help you, even though we have not been introduced—"

At that moment I hear the bull coming, tearing and snorting, having made up his mind at last to the assault. "No thought is there 'except' of dastard flight." I forget my dignity, my matchless wrongs, my thin gown. I spring to the railings; he holds out his hands and pulls me up, and then I actually—jump into his arms, and am held for a moment partially by them and partially by a long strip of grenade which attaches me still to the topmost twig of the dry thorn.

I do not realize for a whole minute that I am safe, and that the bull is panting impotently at the other side of the fence. What recalls me to myself most effectually are the very odd words that my deliverer says as he holds me.

"I hope you are not hurt, Miss Wyclif?"

I am so much surprised that I turn and stare at him in mute inquiry. I *think* he blushes; only it is so difficult to see a blush in the gloaming.

"I beg your pardon," he says. "I fancied we might dispense with ceremony—that the bull had introduced us. You seem surprised that I know your name."

"But you don't know it," I answer in a maze. "That is not my name."

"Not your name? You are not Miss Wyclif?" he answers in stupid amazement like my own.

"Certainly not. What in the world made you think it was?"

He does not answer for a few moments; then he says confusedly, "I had every reason to think it was your name. Will you be so very good as to tell me—may I ask you what it is?"

"Hester Stonor," I answer shortly. He knew it well enough this afternoon when he was offered an introduction to me. "I must go home; it is quite dark. Thank you for helping me."

"You must let me help you a little longer," he says kindly. "You cannot go through these fields alone. It is dark and there are tramps and bulls about. May I not take care of you?"

So we walk together through the dim fields, and I wonder if this can be *I* and that be *he*. We do not talk except in short, disjointed sentences, for though my heart is beating fast—not because of the bull—I have not forgotten the afternoon, and am on my high horse again. When we come to Talkin Lodge, I stop at the gate. "I am staying here," I say briefly. "Good-night, and thank you."

He holds my hand in his, and looks down into my eyes. Oh! how my ridiculous heart flutters.

"May I come to-morrow to tell you why I thought you were Miss Wyclif?" he asks.

How tremulous the air seems, all throbbing with his soft tones and my throbbing heart.

"I don't know," I say, frightened at what I see in his eyes. Then I turn, and run away from him up the garden walk.

My aunt scolds terribly when she hears where I have been. I tell her about the bull, and that I got over the fence all right, but I say nothing about him. Of course he will not come to-

morrow; it would be too much of a romance to be true. Indeed, as the night creeps on, I begin to wonder whether I have not imagined it all.

But in the morning, though I tell myself he will not come, my heart beats fast, and my ears can hear nothing for listening for him. At twelve I hear some one coming up the drive. I know it cannot be he, but I look— It is he; my aunt sees him too.

"Fancy! Here is William Henderson coming to call. I don't know him. He was pointed out to me at the Applebys yesterday. What can he have come for?"

What a stupid old woman my aunt is! To think that my hero can possibly be a man who made money by tinned meat and coals! The idea is absurd.

The maid brings in a card, which is handed to my aunt. He follows closely upon it.

How handsome he is! What an easy aristocratic manner he has. How simply and gracefully he apologizes to my aunt for coming, and explains his visit. Then he hands me a small white parcel.

"If you will open this, Miss Stonor," he says, "you will find how I made the mistake in your name. I have suffered more by it than you have done, for I had been asking all yesterday afternoon to be introduced to Miss Wyclif, and nobody knew her, and when some one offered to introduce me to Miss Stonor, I refused, because I was vexed and hot."

I open the packet. I find—a pocket-handkerchief!

"What does this mean?"

"Is it yours?" he asks, smiling at my amazement.

Mechanically I look at the marking in the corner.

"Isabel Wyclif; 12, 1882."

I do not understand for a moment, then I see it all. In my hurry I had picked up one of Isabel Dudley's old ante-matrimonial pocket-handkerchiefs, and it was hers and not mine that I had dropped from the carriage; and all this time he has been taking me for somebody else!

And he did pick it up, and he has kept it all this time, is the next thing I understand.

And what will the girls say? is the next thing which suggests itself.

It is true, it is true! He has been in love all this time; what a romance! Lord Ernest—

But lo! what sound strikes upon my ear? There is yet another surprise.

"You will stay to luncheon, Mr. Henderson," my aunt is saying graciously.

Mr. Henderson!

Yes, that is true also. He is no Lord Ernest, or lord anything; only William Henderson, who made a fortune out of coals and tinned meat. Only plain William Henderson.

But it is too late to mend matters now. I am so deeply in love that I care nothing for such material things, and only see the man who has been all this time so romantically in love with me. And when I go home and tell the girls all about it, I am so happy and so proud of him, that even they cannot laugh me out of my contentment. Of course, if I had known about the tinned meats at first, it might have been different.

But then I didn't.

PRISCIAN PRIM:

A TALE OF THE ISLE OF MAN.

BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.

CHAPTER III.

NEXT morning he felt sufficiently recovered to take his usual walk to Ronaldsway. Around the shaft were standing three weather-beaten old fishermen, in knee-boots, blue guernseys, and sou'westers; and they were all talking in guttural Manx, and shaking their heads like so many rocks. When Priscian Prim arrived upon the scene, they touched their hats and addressed him in English.

"An' is it coal yer after, Master Prim?" inquired one of them.

"That's what I hope to get, Cosnahan; but these rocks are tough customers to deal with."

"Sure—sure. That's what the *E'liza* thought, when she drifted on them two months ago come next Friday."

"If ye'll excuse me sayin' so, Master Prim," said another, "I don't think a ha'porth o' good'll come out o' that hole there."

"No, nor I neither," put in the third.

"Maybe, Master Prim knows his own business best," said Cosnahan cautiously.

"If I don't, it will be hard to say who does," replied the lawyer, with a pleasant smile.

"An' I dare say now it's all yer own money that's in the consarn."

"It is," said Priscian Prim, rather drawing himself up at this curious question, yet thinking it best to answer it plainly.

"Well—well," said Cosnahan, "'Myr sloo yn chesagt share yn ayrn.' That means, sir—'The smaller the company the bigger the share.' Good-day to you, Master Prim; an' I'll wish yer luck."

And the three fishermen moved off.

Priscian Prim called up one of his men.

"Any sign of coal yet, Quilliam?" he asked.

"This ain't much like it, sir," laughed Quilliam, producing a piece of grey limestone; "the deeper we go the further we seem to get away from it. It looks less likely now than afore."

This was distressing news indeed.

"What had we better do?"

"I'm game to go on till Doomsday," answered Quilliam, who saw a nice little annuity in store for him. "Maybe we'll strike it lower down; there's no knowin'."

"Oh! go on, of course. The coal is there, if you can only find it," said Priscian Prim, who had a very admirable obstinacy.

His expression was sad and his pace unusually slow as he walked back through the lonely lane, and he had hard work to restrain his feelings. It was not despair that had seized upon him, yet he almost felt the chill shadow that precedes it. A lark was singing, oh, so merrily overhead, and blackbirds and thrushes were flooding the air with their melodies, but this gloomy man heard them not—he marked rather the white gulls winging their way inland, a sure sign of a coming storm.

But of a sudden his cheeks flushed and his steps quickened, and frowns gave way to a bright, eager

smile. A short distance ahead of him were a tall mandarin hat, and a tiny, toddling, coal-scuttle bonnet. The latter turned round and greeted him with—

"Good-morning to 'ou, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim. 'Ou is smart to-day."

The little blue eyes had been quick to detect a new tie he had put on that morning. Indeed, he was dressed with more than ordinary care; the hat was speckless, the coat without a single wrinkle, and he wore gloves. Still, it was unfortunate that the child should have noticed it; perhaps, however, Mona might recognize a compliment to herself and be pleased.

She watched him attentively while he talked to her little sister; and, with the ready intuition of her sex, she saw that something was troubling him in spite of his smile. Before, she had had a kind of pitying liking for the man, because he seemed so lonely; living for himself alone, he was naturally a mystery to one of her merry, frank, unselfish disposition, and perhaps it was curiosity that had urged her towards its solution. But now her sympathies were enlisted at once, and she spoke to him with a kindness that speedily banished all thoughts of his recent disappointment. He marvelled at the strange influence she had over him; he even tried to analyze his feelings, but could make nothing of it. It was utterly absurd to suppose that he was in love; why, he had only known her since yesterday, and was he not a woman-hater and a confirmed bachelor? Still, he felt that he liked to be with her, to see her face and to hear her voice; there was a charm in the thing—perhaps the charm of novelty.

She was carrying in her hand a large basket of yellow marguerites, and Brada had a smaller one also full of the same flowers.

"Do you gather those things? I thought they were only weeds," said Priscian Prim.

"What are weeds, Mr. Prim?" she returned.

This was a real puzzler. After a little reflection, he replied:

"Plants that gardeners hoe up, I suppose."

"But what about the cacti? They are a horrible nuisance in some tropical countries, and hot-house plants here."

"Well—yes. Upon my word, I don't know what a weed is."

"A plant in the wrong place, is my definition of it; either a member of an aboriginal race that ought to have disappeared before the civilizing spade, or a trespasser to be 'prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law.'"

"Capital—capital," laughed Priscian Prim, taking the allusion to the law as a delicate compliment to himself. "So you have been civilizing the marguerites. They simply overrun the fields about here."

"I'm going to put them in the right place—in our sitting-room at the hotel; and I shall plant those with roots in the garden."

"Indeed! Nobody else thinks them worth gathering."

"Perhaps I like things that other people don't care about," said Mona, simply.

"And persons?" asked Priscian Prim, with marked eagerness.

"'Ou's kewrious, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim," put in the little coal-scuttle bonnet; "Mona often says, 'Ask no questions and——'"

"Hush—hush—hush! You silly little thing," interrupted Mona. "I don't see what marguerites have got to do with persons, Mr. Prim."

"Nothing at all," he admitted, rather sadly.

"But I dare say I sometimes do take a fancy to those whom others think uninteresting."

His face brightened at this.

"There's Sarah Cowley, for instance," she went on, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. "Of course, everybody knows she's an old thief; but she is very amusing at times."

It would be useless to deny that Priscian Prim had put his question with a certain vague application to his own case; but he scarcely liked to draw a parallel between himself and Sarah Cowley. There was something humiliating in comparing himself with a notorious thief and taking encouragement from Mona's strange *penchant* for her; yet it must be confessed that, in his heart of hearts, he stooped even as low as this. The result was so cheering that he suddenly developed a very novel audacity.

"Some people think me uninteresting," he said; "do you, Miss Mylrea?"

"Certainly not. No man can be uninteresting who is afraid to walk upon fish."

What a tantalizing girl she was, always spoiling a very pretty speech by an explanatory passage that altered its whole meaning—always raising his hopes to dash them to the ground! Yet, strangely enough, he liked her all the more for it; she was so sweet, and pretty, and kind—so different from other girls; but that, you know, was due to the dimple. He was getting rather dubious on this point, however; he was inclined to think that it must be her beautiful blue eyes, for, whenever they were bent upon him, they sent the blood rushing to his cheeks.

He parted with his companions at the door of the hotel, and strolled off to his favourite seat upon the coffin-lid of the Knight Templar: not because it reminded him that "in the midst of life we are in death," or that sorrow waits upon joy, but because the spot was secluded, and therefore well suited to meditation. But he had not been there two minutes when Costain, the hotel waiter, came to him.

It was impossible to look at Costain out of doors without a certain curious dread that, owing to contact with the fresh air, he would suddenly crumble into dust. The man was a mummy, well-preserved, but fragile; his skin resembling very yellow worm-eaten parchment, his body being fleshless, his manner silent and solemn, and his voice sepulchral. A shroud would have been a far more appropriate garment for him than his shabby old swallow-tail coat.

He glided up to Priscian Prim in his usual ghostly way, which was quite enough to make any man jump, especially when engaged in puzzling out an interesting mental problem.

"Good gracious! How you startled me, Costain," said Priscian Prim, in an aggrieved tone.

"I meant it not, sir," whispered the man of silence. "I am seeking Miss Mylrea."

"Miss Mylrea?"

"Yes, sir. Her young gentleman has come," answered Costain, with a funereal shake of the head.

"What!" shouted Priscian Prim, springing to his feet and seizing the man by the shoulders.

It really seemed as if the time for Costain's dissolution had arrived. His face would have answered to Euclid's definition of a line—"length without breadth;" and his shrivelled body was being shaken in that powerful grasp. Priscian was glancing at him with such ferocity that Costain imagined he had taken leave of his senses; and indeed the supposition appeared by no means improbable.

"What!" he shouted for the second time. "Say it again."

"She is engaged to Mr. Henry Quirk, and he is here," faltered Costain.

Priscian Prim relaxed his hold and fell back upon the slab. He felt deadly ill; the black world was whirling round him in a mad dance, mocking voices were gibing at him, and there was no one to comfort him.

CHAPTER IV.

COLONEL MYLREA was a widower in very comfortable circumstances, for he had private property in addition to his pension. He was tall, thin, and muscular, with grey hair, small keen eyes, a prominent nose broken in the centre, and a square resolute chin; in manner, abrupt almost to suspiciousness, yet not unkindly, and with a great affection for his daughter, and a large fund of common-sense. For a man that had visited so many scenes, and mingled with so many people, and led the roving life of a soldier, he was surprisingly simple in his tastes; indeed simplicity stood first in his catalogue of the virtues, and from it, according to him, depended everything else that was good.

This was the line he took in the education of his children. He simply abominated ladies' schools, and always pointed to the book of Nature as the best text-book ever published.

"Look at Cronk-ny-Irey-Lhaa!" he would say. "The grand old giant is a standing reproach to the perpetual din and bustle and love of change that has seized upon mankind. He watched the Druids at their mystic ceremonies; St. Patrick banish Mannanan Mac-y-Lheir, and all his wizard herd; Macon sweep the seas of the Norse robbers; Goddard, son of Olave the Black, sail away to conquer Leinster and Scotland; many a fierce fight between Dane and Manxman, the little Silverburn here running red with their blood; the six months' siege of Castle Rushen by Robert Balliol of Scotland; the Derby family in possession of the island; the cession to the British Crown; he saw all this, yet there he is the same as ever, now smiling in his purple coat, now wearing his crown of clouds. Why, the old fellow is an epitome of all the school-books. Come, let us analyze him; let us dissect him, bit by bit. That boulder there was grooved by icebergs." And so he would run on.

As a natural consequence of this training, Mona acquired an immense amount of general information, but was wholly ignorant of the ways of the world. She loved to roam away to the Stack of Scarlet, and to sit by the side of that extinct volcano, and to wander about the dense limestone rocks, seamed with lava, and crumpled up like so much brown paper; and she knew all

about their history, and had often depicted those strange scenes of long ago. Sometimes, too, she wandered as far as Santon Glen, and sat by the footprints in the hard rock of enormous reptiles ; and in her imagination she saw these wonderful creatures, and the whole place was full of tropical life. When she chose, and found a congenial listener, she could talk about them all like a poet and a philosopher at once ; but notwithstanding all this knowledge, many girls would probably have considered her to be shockingly ignorant.

She had never been out of the Isle of Man but once, a few months before this time, when she paid a short visit to an aunt in London. It so happened that on her very first morning she had to go out shopping by herself ; and before she had gone very far, she met a Manx friend.

"Who is dead, Mr. Smith ?" she asked.

"Dead !" he repeated, surprised at such a singular question.

"Yes. What great man is dead ?"

"I really have not heard of anybody."

"But every gentleman I meet is going to a funeral," she persisted.

"Dear me, how odd ! It must be a very large one," he stammered.

"I mean you among the number."

"But—Miss Mylrea—well, I'm all at sea."

"You're all wearing top-hats and black coats," explained Mona. Whereupon Mr. Smith went off into a peal of laughter, remembering that these uncomfortable articles of attire are never worn in Manxland upon a week-day except in the case of a funeral, which is often attended by the people *en masse*.

It will be seen then that Priscian Prim was right in thinking that Mona was different from other girls ; though the reason lay a good deal deeper than the dimple.

While Costain was looking for her in the Abbey garden, she was entering the private sitting-room that her father had engaged. There was with him a handsome, good-humoured looking young fellow, who seemed perfectly at home, and advanced to meet her with the air of an old friend.

"So you've come, Henry," she said, with a bright smile. "Remember we are going to Santon Glen this afternoon."

"And I's going too, to pay pwopwiety," puts in Brada.

"Oh, yes, you shall come," said Henry.

"Dinner at six to the minute," said the colonel. "No waiting ; cold dishes for those that are late."

"Papa, don't you think we might ask Mr. Prim ?" inquired Mona. "You know him, and he is stopping here now, and he seems so very lonely."

"Humph ! What do you say, Henry ?"

"I think he's not at all a bad sort, if you can only get beneath the surface. The fellow has plenty of pluck, and that's what I like about him. As a lawyer, he has tried his level best, but the island is so flooded with lawyers, that he couldn't get clients, and then he turned his hand to something else."

"The something else was stupid enough."

"If he's not clever, that's not his fault," said Mona, with a pink flush on her cheeks. "I'm sure he would be nice, if he would only go more among people."

"'Ou said he hated ladies' sassiety, Mona," ex-

claimed Brada ; "but he helped me to build a bwidge, and looked kite comfy."

They all laughed at this, and the colonel said—

"Well, I confess myself that I admire his spirit, and I can't help pitying him. I know more about him than any of you. Yes, we'll ask him to dinner. Another knife and fork won't be much trouble."

Costain was accordingly despatched with the invitation, but he returned to say that Mr. Prim had been seized with a sudden faintness, and had gone to bed.

It may appear strange that a two-day's fancy should have laid such violent hold upon him ; but it is often so when the first trial comes fairly late in life, and when Priscian Prim took to a thing, he did so in earnest. There were no half-measures about him ; he would have made a desperate gambler had his inclinations lain that way. Even the force of the struggle made him more and more in love with Mona ; for it brought her continually before him, recalling her every look and word, and putting everything else out of his head.

When he rose from his bed next morning, his one desire was to escape from his fellow beings and to be alone. He walked over to Ronaldsway, heard the same discouraging report upon his mine, avoided the lane, and wandered in the fields. It was not a pleasant sight to see him slinking along the avenue, like a whipped dog ; but he had a strange feeling that every one must know his secret. He hurried over his meals, remained in the coffee-room no longer than was absolutely necessary, and spent the greater part of the day in his own room. He sat close to his window, which looked out upon the lawn ; and once, when he saw Mona, his face brightened up like a summer sunrise. And then Henry Quirk came and stood beside her, and the light faded from the picture, and all was dark again.

But it would not have been Priscian Prim had he not set himself resolutely to combat this weakness, and here perhaps want of experience proved a stumbling-block. He decided that it was best to shun Mona entirely, and a ridiculous game of hide-and-seek ensued. At the flutter of a petticoat at one end of the Abbey orchard he fled to the other ; if he caught a glimpse of Mona through the trees he bolted through the door, and never felt safe until he had gained his own room. Naturally she was vexed at his conduct. She had offended him, she supposed ; but how ? He never would come near enough for a chance of explanation, and so this foolish game of cross purposes went on for more than a week, and those who played at it were sad of heart. It was fun for Brada, who chased him about the grounds with great zest ; but this little toddler, though she often shouted at him, "How do 'ou do, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim ?" never succeeded in overtaking him.

One day, however, he came suddenly in contact with the colonel, and as there was no way of escape, he was obliged to speak and shake hands.

"Hullo, Mr. Prim ! I've been looking for you everywhere. Come to dinner," said the colonel.

"Thank you ; but the fact of the matter is, I dine early."

"Bless the fellow! Why, you're in rare luck—two dinners in one day!"

"I'm afraid I should suffer for them afterwards," said Priscian Prim gravely.

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the colonel, and dragged him into dinner.

He suffered agonies all the evening, and his remarks were doled out in monosyllables. Mona's blue eyes were often bent upon him in grieved wonderment; the colonel examined him through a pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez as carefully as if he were an entomological specimen; Brada made an opera-glass of her chubby little fists, and looked at him that way; and all the time Henry Quirk appeared to be poking fun at him. He had rather liked the fellow at one time, but now he positively hated him. What right had he to be in love with that sweet girl? thought Priscian Prim, and promptly decided that he had not a shadow of a right.

For the first time in his life, he refused to sing, which was all the more extraordinary, as Mona, remembering the fish, had ordered larks for dinner, so that he might be in good voice afterwards. But no; he pleaded a sore throat, whereat Brada shook her flaxen head in an unpleasantly sceptical fashion. I am afraid that, upon the whole, he made himself very disagreeable, and some of the party were not sorry when he was gone.

But Mona followed him out of the room, and there was a kindly, wistful light in her eyes as she said simply—

"If I have done anything to vex you, Mr. Prim, I am very sorry."

He was shivering like a leaf. "No—oh, certainly not," he stammered out.

"Then why have you avoided me?"

"Because—because I want to be your friend."

"But surely that's an odd way of showing friendship," said Mona quite puzzled by his words.

"Yes, I know; but I'm an odd man. You'll shake hands, won't you?"

"Of course I will." And she put her dainty little hand in his, but he never grasped it; only stood gazing at it and quivering.

"You don't call that shaking hands, surely?" said Mona lightly; yet there was a tremble in her tones that he was quick to catch at.

He dropped her hand as if it were red hot, and went on eagerly—

"Then we are friends, and I'll try not to hate him for your sake; and good-night, and God bless you!"

And, turning quickly, he darted down the stairs, leaving her gazing half-wonderingly, half-pityingly after him.

A very singular change had come over Priscian Prim.

Costain met him in the hall; and there was a faint glimmer of intelligence upon his yellow, time-hardened face. Coming noiselessly over the oilcloth, he whispered the one word—

"Sir."

"Well?" said Priscian Prim, who could be equally laconic.

"Matthew Cosnahan, the master of the *Fairy Queen*, is waiting for you in the coffee-room."

"Tell him to be blowed," said Priscian Prim. His manners had lately undergone a sad deterioration

"Yes, sir. But he says his business is urgent."

"What about?"

"The mine."

Priscian Prim argued the point no longer. He went off at once to see Matthew Cosnahan.

(*To be continued.*)

A HOME OF PEACE.

THE placid waters of the lonely mere,
Shut in by shelving banks unruffled lie,
Their depths as azure as the summer sky
That arches over, stainless, cloudless, clear,
A sapphire matched with sapphire.

Far and near,
Crest after crest, rise the eternal hills,
Along whose emerald sides the sparkling rills
Glance downward to the river.

All things here
Breathe soft of peace, "fair quiet and sweet rest;"
The song of birds and hum of laden bee
Cease as the day draws onward, and the West
Floods with a roseate glory shore and sea,
And in the shadowed Orient, faint and far,
Gleams o'er the topmost peak a lonely star.

R. STANSBY WILLIAMS.

THREE OFFERS.

BY E. CHILTON,
Author of "*Wade's Daughter*," &c.

CHAPTER L

CICELY.

THE "old clock on the stairs" had just struck six, a very old clock was he, groaning before he began, as if to protest against striking at all at his age—he had struck so often, for so many ears. Subsiding, he groaned again. The stairs were also very old, of dark oak, winding between black balustrades.

Suddenly, from a room at their head, something not old sped forth, and ran lightly down them.

"Oh, what a morning!" cried Cicely Fenwick; "what a day it is going to be!"

'It was the time of roses:
We pluck'd them as we passed,'"

sang out her clear young voice as she opened the heavy entrance door.

All the leaves that clustered about the mouldings of the ancient porch sparkled with dew, herald of the heat which lay in waiting, enshrouded in soft haze. As the girl came out, perfumes of roses, of sweetbriar, of lilies of the valley, saluted her; between the shrubs she caught glimpses of a calm landscape, whence one or two threads of smoke were already rising from cottage chimneys into the dreamy blue. The birds

were all astir; here and there on the old walls the ivy rustled, betraying a hidden nest; bees were at work; butterflies had begun their day of busy idleness.

For a moment Cicely stood motionless, drinking in the sweetnes. Then she gathered a creamy rose and deep red rosebud, and fastened them at her throat; carefully selected a spray from the bed of lilies; parted the ivy, to peep in upon a cluster of hungry bills; and danced back into the house. Crossing the hall, she had almost come into abrupt collision with a middle aged woman, who had just issued from a baize door in the opposite direction.

The woman herself was flying rather than walking; her long cap-strings streamed from their pinnacle of ribbon-bows and lace; her round eyes resembled buttons of jet, matching her hair, which, compressed by combs into fat rolls on either temple, shone with equal blackness. Semi-circular black eyebrows, rising or frowning as occasion offered, with marvellous celerity, gave a somewhat ludicrous aspect to her countenance, which was sharp, brown, and thin. Her figure also was thin, and of middle height.

"Why, goodness gracious me, Miss Cicely! you had almost knocked me into the very extreme middle of next week."

"Or you me, which would have been the most inconvenient, as then I should have missed the review. Timpy, grandpapa must write to Paris about a pair of electric wings for you; then you can pursue your course above our heads, and we shall run less risk of annihilation. Your speed outrivals the man with the cork-leg. Oh, Timpy, it is going to be the most glorious day! Everything out of doors is too lovely! Is grandpapa getting up?—do listen at his door. He was called half-an-hour ago. If we don't start very early we shall get nothing of a place; and if I don't see the Prince, or still worse, the Princess, I shall come home a blighted being. Run, Timpy—speed!—and if he's not up, knock till you hear him in his slippers. Tell him I've got a lovely lily of the valley to embellish him, but that unless he comes down directly I shall start alone. You can chaperone me in Madame Duberg's brocaded bonnet—the hundred years' old one—that I dressed up in at Christmas. Lady Timpkins—my aunt, Lady Timpkins!—mention all this to grandpapa. Quick! I must go to my breakfast."

She disappeared through one of the heavy oaken doors, while Timpkins, once her nurse, now her maid—all but her mother—chuckled to herself with working eyebrows, devising how with due respect to convey the young lady's messages.

Half-past six announced by the venerable clock.

Cicely was in a fever. She had finished her breakfast all alone at the round table, which made a cosy oasis at one end of the great black-panelled dining-room. She rang a peal at the bell.

"Jones, two more breakfast-cups. And what other cold meat is there in the house, Jones?"

"I will inquire, Miss Cicely."

"Never mind about inquiring. Bring whatever there is—the more the better. All the cold joints or pies in the larder, Jones; and several plates. As quickly as you can, please. Plates for fifteen,"

Jones opened internal eyes, but betrayed no sign of them. Shortly, assisted by a page, he returned with loaded trays, the contents whereof, with scrupulous gravity, he arrayed upon the side-board.

"That will do, Jones, thank you. You may go."

For the next few minutes all was silence in the dining-room; but the young lady was very busy.

Ten minutes before seven an elderly gentleman, tall and somewhat bulky, with hair on the turn between sandy and grey, light eyes, and an amiable countenance, proceeded, in no manner of hurry, downstairs.

The dining-room door flew open.

"Here at last, grandpapa. How ashamed you ought to be! And now you've just five minutes for your breakfast. What will you have? 'Walk round!' 'The world's before you where to choose!'"

The gentleman cast upon the table a glance, slow but comprehensive. Before his seat, poured out in readiness, were a cup of coffee, a cup of chocolate, and a cup of tea; around them a multitude of plates, hot and cold, supplied with bounteous helpings of as many preparations of meats.

"Cicely, you deserve to go the workhouse. 'Waste not, want not,' my dear," said Mr. Duberg, with a slow smile.

"Exactly. Waste no more time; that was my maxim. Now, do say quickly which you will have. There's not one instant to lose; and you'll have a sunstroke if we don't start directly."

Having pondered full a moment, Mr. Duberg chose coffee and the broiled leg of a duck. For the coffee, a minute later, he substituted tea; then observed that duck was bilious, and he should prefer cold lamb; but when Cicely, with a whisk, had changed the plates, he decided upon a kidney.

"And I've had all this carving for nothing!" Mr. Duberg paused dubiously in the act of dividing his kidney. "No, no, grandpapa! you mustn't change again—you mustn't—you mustn't. There!"

And the bell pealed once more.

"Why do you ring, my dear?" inquired the leisurely gentleman.

"Oh, to put you out of temptation. Jones, the table is too crowded; Mr. Duberg wishes these plates to go away."

"You are a saucy minx," said Mr. Duberg as the servant retired; but he drew down the fair young face to kiss it, as he spoke.

At last they were off! Half-past seven was on the point of striking; but the speed of the beautiful black horses satisfied even Cicely. Higher and higher the sun was climbing; bluer spread the sky; greener, more lovely, every moment—so she thought—appeared the world beneath it. Mr. Duberg, dressed up for the occasion in a frock-coat—his abhorrence—Cicely's lily of the valley in his buttonhole, gazed on her gladness with pleased eyes, patting her hand now and then in his slow and kindly way.

It was verily the time of roses for Cicely! She was just eighteen, full of romance, of vague expectations of something—wonderful and beautiful—about to happen. Scarcely a morning but she rose with that vague expectation stirring her

heartstrings; especially on these mornings of early June, when the world without seemed a reflection of that within her. An orphan, she had never known an orphan's desolation. She could only just remember her first arrival at Wilcroft, where her godfather, Mr. Duberg, like the god-parents in the fairy tales, had delivered her from poverty and hardship—coming quickly, at her father's death, to remove her to a home far surpassing that of her babyhood. She did not recollect her mother; and her father she saw so seldom that she had no association of loss or dreariness in connection with his death. Her world had been in her nursery, with her kind and merry Timpkins; and she had been too young to notice that this nursery was very bare, or that her father's face, when in his rare intervals of leisure she beheld it, was worn with care and toil. She knew not, and, had she known, would have felt no dismay, that she was left a penniless infant in this hard world; she knew only that it was very pleasant to come with Timpy and the kind gentleman away from the dingy town to the free and beautiful country; and that the gentleman was very kind, and spoiled her, and gave her all she asked, and was, as she for several years believed, and learned to call him, her grandpapa.

And now, as they were rapidly borne through the summer loveliness, that vague expectation of which we spoke was stronger than before. Almost it amounted to a presentiment; in the language of fiction, she felt as though to-day she would meet her fate. The world was to her all fairyland; somewhere in it was a fairy prince—like the prince of Tennyson's poem—

“O eyes long laid in happy sleep!
O happy sleep that lightly fled!
O happy kiss that woke thy sleep!
O love, thy kiss would wake the dead!
* * * * *
“A hundred summers! Can it be?
And whither goest thou? Tell me where.
O seek my father's court with me,
For there are greater wonders there.”

These words, or their spirit, flitted through Cicely's mind as, her lips half parted in a dreamy smile, she sat opposite Mr. Duberg, who seldom spoke throughout the two hours' drive, save of the prospects of grass or clover; and watched those grass and clover fields fly past her, and the green hedges with their wild rosebuds almost opened, and the hills far away, and the peeps of a winding river: while round about her spread a universe of golden possibilities.

CHAPTER II.

KENNETH.

THE race-course was all alive with fine carriages, containing finer ladies, and gentlemen in faultless array—Mr. Duberg felt suddenly a soothing consciousness of his frock-coat; with hundreds, thousands rather, of figures on foot, gala figures, pressing before the shabby figures—who yet, like the rest, had in every line an air of pleased anticipation; with regiments, each in its own uniform, of proud volunteers, marching, marching, marching, each to

its own station on the plain; with mounted officers, marshalling their men; with music from the bands. The grand stand was rapidly filling with favoured possessors of tickets—filling so far as was consistent with free passage to the seats, decked in crimson cloth, reserved for the Prince and Princess of Wales and their party—guests, specially for this occasion, of a local peer.

Thanks to the powerful black horses, Mr. Duberg's break was in excellent time, obtaining a place in the front row of carriages, close to the grand stand, and to the cordon which marked off the review ground.

“How delightful!” for the hundredth time cried Cicely; “I shall see the Princess to my heart's content. Grandpapa, you may stretch your legs as much as you like—but pray don't go very far, or I shall be quite alone—and that, as you know, is your own fault.”

“My misfortune, you mean, my dear—my constitutional misfortune; because I have outgrown my pleasure in unfamiliar society.”

“Because you are too idle, as you know very well, to entertain any one, and so you won't invite any chaperones,” said impertinent Cicely. “Never mind, I'm much happier by myself; only please don't forget me, and go too far, grandpapadarling.”

Her excited young voice rang out more clearly than she intended. A young man, who, with a friend, was strolling towards the cordon, glanced up at her. Cicely blushed as she caught his eye.

Half-a-dozen times had Mr. Duberg wished himself at home, before, two hours later, the bands struck up “God bless the Prince of Wales;” and amid a universal movement—a pressure of the crowd, a myriad hats upraised, a myriad voices cheering—a line of open carriages drove swiftly to the stand, and in the foremost appeared the beautiful Princess; while simultaneously the Prince, in full uniform, rode along the line of Volunteers.

The first enthusiasm over, Cicely was not so much absorbed as to be unaware that the young man whose notice she had previously attracted was still at no great distance; and by some inner consciousness she knew that, further, he was aware of her; in fact, that, now and again, as her eyes were turned towards the moving regiments, he stole at her long glances. She encountered one of them, and in it was something which quickened the beating of her heart.

Although she knew no one well—for her god-father was not addicted to society—she was acquainted by sight, if not personally, with most of her neighbours in this distinguished row; she knew the name—no more—of this very young man's companion; but himself she had never seen until this eventful morning. A most eventful morning it seemed—more so than the Volunteer Review, or even the vision of the fair Princess, could warrant.

He might have been a prince, she thought, when, his attention being diverted, she could gratify her curiosity by surveying him. He was finely built and tall, with an air of distinction; his face had a nearer approach to Cicely's ideal than she had ever yet beheld. Was it handsome? If not, she preferred plainness. The expression was intelligent, keen, manly; the features were well defined; the eyes at first seemed black, but a second glance showed them to be blue—a very dark blue, beneath dark eyelashes; the hair was

dark also. Yes, just such a face, just such a form, she had seen in dreams at night, awaking afterwards in a glow of undefined rapture; by day, when she had been reading of her favourite heroes, and had closed her eyes to picture them, as the winter flames flickered, or the summer bees hummed at her side.

"Ready for luncheon, Cicely?" said Mr. Duberg. "Jones, you may open the hampers. By-the-by, I see young Linton—a good opportunity to settle about the cob."

Cicely knew nothing and cared less about any cob; but she knew that Linton was the name of the young man accompanying her fairy prince. Five minutes later, both were introduced to her; Mr. Duberg had invited them to share his luncheon:

"Cicely! Mr. Linton, and his friend, Mr. Egmont. Now, Linton, you have an appetite, I hope? To my mind, the advantage of this kind of thing is that it gives one an appetite."

"It gives me an appetite," cried Cicely—"for sights and sounds. Old Wilcroft will seem so tame afterwards! I wish we could go to something of the sort three times every week."

"You would soon be tired of it," cried Egmont, smiling at her. Again, in that unaccountable way, her heart throbbed.

"Egmont is in the Guards," said young Linton; "you can't expect him to feel more than a patronizing pity for a provincial review. In fact, it was difficult to drag him here; though, now that he is come, he does not seem inclined to go away."

"If you are a Guardsman, I daresay you despise the poor Volunteers," said Cicely; "but you must confess they are a splendid race of men when you see them in such numbers. As for me, I admire them more than any other branch of the army."

"The army!" repeated Egmont with an amused smile. "Miss Fenwick, you are evidently one of those who take the will for the deed!"

"Miss Fenwick!" He knew her name! Mr. Duberg had not mentioned it. Perhaps he had asked his companion who she was! The notion brought a furtive smile to Cicely's lips as she continued her merry chatter. She looked her best and her brightest, and her new acquaintance found a strange pleasure in her society.

"Two uncommonly nice young fellows, Linton and his friend," remarked Mr. Duberg, as the break turned homeward. "You don't often find young men of their age who care to spend the best hours of a summer day with an old fogey like me."

That night Cicely, for the first time in her life, gazed critically at herself in the glass. No! she was not pretty; she had only bright hair, bright gray eyes, dimples, and her youth, to recommend her. It was not a face to fascinate any one at first sight, she thought, like faces she had read of. She wondered why—why— The wonder was only lost at length in sleep.

"I am glad I have seen him," was her first thought on the following morning; "I am glad to know that my imaginations are not altogether myths. And now I shall have a face in my mind for Arthur—and John Halifax. I don't suppose I shall ever see it again."

Nevertheless, when, towards midday, Cicely went out, in her shady hat, with scissors and a large basket, there was her hero in the flesh, not only in fancy, riding down the avenue on a fat

brown horse—looking, despite his steed, every inch a Guardsman.

"Good morning, Miss Fenwick," said he, at once on his feet. "I apologize most profoundly for this early visit. I am only a messenger from Lady Anne Linton, my aunt. Mr. Duberg was anxious to see the cob, and I volunteered—I am a volunteer too, you see—to ride him over."

The cob again! Opportune cob! Cicely rang for a servant to remove him, and escorted his rider into the house.

Mr. Duberg was sincerely grateful. He had one or two important letters to write before luncheon. Mr. Egmont would remain to luncheon, of course; and afterwards, if Mr. Egmont had time, they would go together to the stables and look at the cob.

Mr. Egmont was only too willing: his time was Mr. Duberg's time. The godfather, genuinely regretting the present necessity of depriving the young man of his society, proposed, in compensation, that Cicely should show him the gardens.

"You were just going to gather some flowers, I think. May I help you?" said Mr. Egmont.

So while Mr. Duberg, shut up in his study, wrote his important letters—consisting of an order for some remarkable pheasants' food, and a reply to an application from Mr. Walford respecting the Duberg pedigree—duties varied by the consumption of a biscuit and a glass of sherry, with occasional divergence to an easy chair, *The Times*, and *The Field*—while her godfather was thus ardently occupied, Cicely and their visitor wandered together through the varied beauties of the gardens.

The scent of geraniums, of heliotropes, of roses, had never seemed so sweet; the velvet slopes, the many-hued beds, the terraces, the views, dexterously contrived, had never such a charm for Cicely. Her companion did not pall upon her; on the contrary, it seemed that she had never known what companionship meant before. They fitted, as the young and happy do fit, over all manner of subjects—grave and gay, intellectual and social. When the luncheon bell rang, it appeared to Cicely that she had known Mr. Egmont a long time. She knew also his personal history: that he was an orphan like herself, and still in mourning for his father; that he had two or three married sisters, and one brother, who had inherited the family place in Cornwall; that he had been in the Guards three years, since his nineteenth birthday; that he had two months' leave, and had travelled from London with his present hostess, his mother's sister, Lady Anne. Further, that his Christian name was Kenneth.

"Kenneth Egmont! His name exactly suits him," thought Cicely.

CHAPTER III.

THE DANCE.

No one who knew Mr. Duberg could feel surprised that he was not immediately able to decide respecting the cob. Did Lady Anne desire an immediate answer? Well, another purchaser was in view; but no hurry for a day or two. If Mr. Duberg would think it over, the young man would

be passing this way to-morrow; and—since he had undertaken to negotiate the matter—he would look in again. His cousin was a good deal engaged, reading for an examination; Linton was somewhat dull: it would be no trouble, only a pleasure. He glanced, just glanced, at Cicely, as he spoke. Mr. Duberg was highly pleased, and subsequently remarked that he had never in his life seen a more obliging young fellow.

And the next day he came again, as he had said. This time it was the afternoon, and he remained to dinner. The transaction of the cob was not yet concluded. One or two questions on either side appeared to require replies. Those replies, it seemed, could not be sent by post. Both the Guardsman and Mr. Duberg—whose correspondence, as we have seen, was already almost too much for him—appeared indeed to have forgotten that a post existed. If this were not forgotten by Cicely, she thought it not necessary to remind them. The possibilities of the unconscious cob were at length exhausted, his permanent abode being transferred to the Wilcroft stables; but other possibilities remained, and other excuses; and somehow the young man and the girl were continually together.

Lady Anne, whom hitherto she had scarcely known by sight, called, asking specially for Miss Fenwick. Mr. Duberg and Cicely were invited to dine and sleep at Linton; Mr. Duberg declined, whereupon Lady Anne insisted on Cicely's coming alone. The house was full of visitors; the Misses Linton and other young ladies of the party were pretty and charming—far more pretty, far more charming, thought Cicely, than herself. She wondered, when first she beheld them, that he could think of her at all; he would not care to speak to her, she was sure, in their presence. But directly he came into the room, that uneasy fancy vanished. It was her eyes that those dark blue ones—which seemed to her so beautiful, sought; it was to her he came, it was to her he talked; no one else had any existence for him, while she was by.

Cicely's organ of veneration was highly developed, and it had found abundant scope in this new friend: not for his good looks, but for that which those good looks typified, did she admire him. She had no doubt but that he was altogether, as in appearance, a hero.

She loved music, and so did he; and when he sang, his voice, thought Cicely, was, like his face, an exponent of his soul. He had read all her favourite books; she had never imagined that a soldier, still less a Guardsman, could care so much for reading. And withal there was a brightness, a winning charm, about him, which took her heart by storm.

So rolled by the summer weeks, and Cicely wondered what any one meant by calling earth a desert! People who talked or wrote in that way must be pitifully desponding: their besetting sin was discontent.

In these days Cicely's step was lighter and feeter than ever, as she ran up and down the ancient staircases and passages of Wilcroft; and her voice was always singing, singing, in accompaniment—till it did one's heart good to hear her, said Timpkins, with working eyebrows, in the housekeeper's room.

Kenneth Egmont's leave was nearly over; Lady

Anne was going to Brighton; and in this first week of August, by way of farewell, she gave a little dance. Cicely had again been spending two or three days at Linton; the dance over, she returned to Wilcroft in company with Mr. Duberg, who had, with great difficulty, been persuaded to attend this parting entertainment.

They had come away earlier than Cicely could have desired; but she was very happy. Her godfather slumbered in his corner of the carriage, and she, lost in blessed dreams, leant back in hers. As they drove through the lanes, great trees showed black against the dark blue sky; the stars shone like calm eyes, far away; perfumes of honeysuckle, of sycamore flowers, floated through the open windows; strange sleepless insects whirred and hummed; once, in waiting at a turnpike, a wakeful thrush was heard, sending clear notes into the stillness.

"Weber's Last Waltz! No, one could not dance to that," said Mr. Duberg suddenly. He was talking in his sleep; roused by his own voice, he opened his eyes, and sat up.

"You would not dance with Lady Anne; and now your dreams are taking her revenge!" cried Cicely, laughing.

"Lady Anne!—pish, pish!" said Mr. Duberg. He did not again fall asleep; when Cicely next looked that way, she saw him in meditations no less deep than her own.

But those were too absorbing to leave room for more than a glance at other people's.

"I wonder what is the matter with Timpy," she thought, later, as that functionary, who had been with her at Linton, attended on her in silence, broken only by occasional sighs.

"You're tired, Timpy—do go to bed, and I shan't want you in the morning; you must have a long rest."

"No, thank you, Miss Cicely; I'm not in the least particle tired; and I've a duty of importance to execute in the morning," replied Timpkins, astonishing Cicely, who laughed and shrugged her shoulders.

CHAPTER IV.

A WAGER.

It seemed to the girl but a minute since her eyes had closed. Yet now they had opened upon broad day, and the old clock was striking nine.

"Why, I've been asleep six hours and a half! And what a time to be in bed on such a morning! Timpy, as you have chosen, notwithstanding my advice, to get up yourself, you might have awakened me, instead of sitting there in dejection, watching my slumbers. I suppose you thought I should be ill after my first dance, to say nothing of the supper; so I forgive the intrusion. But now, please go away."

"No, Miss Cicely; begging your pardon, my dear. I thought as you should have your night's rest. I've a painful duty to perform; but executed it shall be, with a mother's faithfulness; 'wounding but to heal,' as the poem says. Don't take it to heart too much, Miss Cicely; it's best your eyes should be opened."

"Is anything the matter with grandpapa?" asked Cicely, pale in a moment,

"No, missy—not that; the blessed gentleman, he's still asleep, and his boots outside the door, all innocent and unknowing. Little he thinks, God bless him, of the 'awks a prying about his dove. No, my dear. But I'll quick to the point, not to suspend you. I observed last night to Mrs. Reynolds—her ladyship's housekeeper—with reference to the supper, having been a witness to her care in preparing it, that I *should* like to see it laid out. Says she, 'Mrs. Timpkins, you shall.' With that, being busy herself, she calls John to escort me upstairs. John he conducts me to the side door of the dining-room, and just at the instant his bell rings. But 'Go in,' he says, 'Mrs. Timpkins; no one will be near for a good hour.' So in I goes. A beautiful supper indeed, my dear! I could not resist walking about: the jellies in particular entranced me; and—though I would not for ten worlds any of them got wind of it—well you know, Miss Cicely, I never set eyes on such supper tables before! But while I was perambulating, what do I hear but voices coming that way. What idea will they form of me, thinks I! A big screen stood handy. I whips behind it—my way to either door was clean cut off. Between the chunks of the screen I could see; and in walks two fine young gentlemen. One was him they call my lord; the other I didn't know, but the lordship addresses him as Charley."

In her relief at not hearing the name she had been expecting and dreading, she knew not why, Cicely broke into laughter.

"Excuse me, Timpy; I can't get over the notion of your black eyes peeping through the screen."

The same black eyes were fixed now upon herself, flashing and staring with every motion of the animated eyebrows, as Timpkins continued, bending forward with fingers intertwined, the knuckles of which, from time to time, she cracked in her excitement.

"If you can laugh in another five minutes, Miss Cicely, I shan't mind your laughing now. 'Come, Charley,' says my lord, 'I feels it my duty to opinionate Lady Anne's sherry.'

"To what, Timpy?"

"Never mind the exact words, missy; you know what I mean. With that he helps himself, and the other does likewise; and while they sips, and nibbles biscuits, they talks and laughs. As I was meditating on the possibility of lowering myself to my hands and knees, and creeping out behind the tables, I catches a name. Oh, my deary! But I hope you'll snap your fingers at 'em; pluck up a spirit, and pay no heed, except to learn wisdom."

"Go on, Timpy," said Cicely, very white.

"Ah, my darling, the name was yours! 'The little Fenwick girl—that was their impudence. I felt ready to bounce out in their faces; but, thinks I, if there's a plot here, I'll know it. So I listens, and thankful am I it was so! 'By Jove,' or some other heathen expletive, 'Egmont'll win his bet,' says Charley; 'she must have been ready enough to fall into the snare! I wish I'd been beforehand with him.' A little sniggering fellow! I wish he had. It would have taken him down a bit, at any rate."

"I don't understand, Timpy. What did they mean?"

The young voice had an imploring tone which went to the nurse's heart.

"I'll tell you quick, my deary, and get it over. It's like bad medicine—for your good, my darling, for your good. Not to repeat all their words—which I couldn't, and they ain't worth it—it seems my lord and this here Charley and young Mr. Egmont, the villain, belongs to the same London club; and Mr. Egmont is head over ears in debt, and at his wits' end how to save himself as all London town could tell us; and some of 'em—oh, the wickedness of them London young men!—told him, it appears, about you, and how Mr. Duberg, the blessed gentleman—the old boy,' miss, such was their impudence!—had laid by no end of a mint of money, and you was to have every penny. Only master, they said, kept you so close, he'd never have a chance to get at you. And with that Mr. Egmont appears to have got up and laid a bet as he would settle it by the end of his leave. And the rest of 'em—the brazen-faced monsters!—they bets, some with him, some against; the greater lot against, which stirs his blood. And with that down he comes. Never you trust a man's face again, Miss Cicely; I had one once I thought a deal of, and a fine trick he played me; but that's neither here nor there. Down he comes to these quiet places, with the lambs a-grazing, and fixes his 'awk eyes on my dear. But I shall have saved her. Bless that screen! The screen and old Timpy, they'll have saved you, my precious Miss Cicely!"

"Timpy," said Cicely, in an odd, strained voice, "have you told me all the truth? Are you sure you could not be mistaken?"

"Sure! Certain, positive sure," cried Timpy, rising so suddenly that her chair fell with a thump behind her. "Don't you beguile yourself, Miss Cicely; and don't let him beguile you. The bet was this: you was to be engaged by the end of his leave, and married by the twelfth of October."

The words rang out in triumph. But Cicely was silent. She lay motionless, staring at the wall.

(*To be continued.*)

A GOLDEN WEDDING.

BY CHARLES KRUGER.

L LANRWST is on the line of the most approved of touring ground in North Wales. As the guide books would say—it is pleasantly situated on the river Conway, and is on the direct route, by road or rail, from the north, to that favourite resort of artists, Bettws-y-Coed, and the mountainous district thereabout. Out of the season, when the touring coaches are in retirement, Llanrwst has all the usual stolid stillness of a small Welsh town. Its greatest excitement will be provided by a travelling Cheap Jack, if one should visit the town; for, as he performs in the open air and makes no collection, it is possible to stand and be entertained by his astounding colloquial powers and by the conjurings or musical exhibitions of his "planksman," without once encroaching upon the strictest rules of economy.

Some few years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Yoys lived in this town. When you were intent upon reaching their abode, you must needs walk down some

ill-paved streets, cross over several patches of chronically muddy ground, and then enter a narrow street whose surface was not conducive to neat walking. This latter could scarcely be called a thoroughfare, for at one end a large timber-yard blocked further progress; but when you had reached this far the cottage of the Yoys was near you. Side by side with the cottage stood a little workshop, very small both in breadth and height, but just large enough to hold a forge and the implements and materials necessary for the business of a nail-maker, and leaving room for the careful movements of an operative. And here Mr. Yoys worked at his trade, and managed to earn sufficient money to supply his wife and himself with food, clothing, and shelter. For many years his labour had gained nothing more; but of this he rarely complained, and perhaps seldom thought of it, for they were a most contented couple, frugal by habit, and unexpectant of any luxury beyond their past and present store.

At the time now spoken of, William Yoys was in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and his wife Abigail was in her seventy-second, and in another year they might celebrate their golden wedding. This long partnership had had the effect of welding their manners, their habits, and their sympathies, until now they seemed to be a good illustration of the precept that man and wife should be as one. It also appeared as though they had gradually grown like each other in looks as well as in thoughts and deeds. The years had passed away smoothly and happily with them, and though their love had perhaps become more silent, it had gained in strength. No doubt each lived for the other, and to take one away—what would there be left? Nothing but a poor broken-hearted creature, who had no mission on earth, but who had to wait until decay of body brought the release of a sorrowing spirit.

But this phantom of parting, this dreadful thought—which when it came to either would make their eyes fill with tears and their old limbs tremble—was perhaps a needless meeting of trouble. They both knew full well that their long companionship was a blessing reserved for the minority, and that by the laws of nature the long continuance of their present state of health was at best a doubtful matter. They had no children, none had been born, and the few relatives who had dwelt in that neighbourhood had all been laid in their graves many years ago, and those who had resided in other districts were either dead or lost sight of. So this old couple had none beside themselves to care for, and there were none to show any care for them. And they were not gossipy, so no wonder they lived as it were in a little world of their own.

It was the fact of this failing strength, and the knowledge that it was by his labour that they must live—having no other means—that occasionally made William Yoys feel faint and sad; but his quiet, untroubled life made him better able to combat the forebodings that at times oppressed him; for never having suffered from want he was less likely to properly imagine the pain of it. But as the recent years had passed away, the old nail-maker had found his strength gradually decaying, and causing the output of his labour to dwindle until the income was barely enough for the necessities of their life. His spells of work

had to be shortened, so that the frame might be recruited by rest, and worse still, his hands were losing their cunning.

But there was another cause which had helped to warp the receipts of the old worker, and if you had ever been in Llanrwst and had known William Yoys sufficiently well to stand at the open door or at the window of his workshop (there wasn't room for you inside) and chat with him, you would no doubt have heard of it.

"We haf no chance against machinery," the old man would say, speaking English rather brokenly. "It do make the nails so cheap that I can-not compete; I can-not get not near the price I wass to get some years agone. The nail trade is all tun now."

True enough, William Yoys had been left far behind by the improved methods that had been brought into his own trade, and his work had never been sufficiently remunerative to allow of much preparation for old age or protracted illness.

Whilst the bread-winner was slowly, but patiently, heating and cutting and hammering the iron in his little shop, Abigail Yoys would be attending to her household duties in the cottage next door. There had been nothing wasted in the building of this tenement, not a brick nor a bit of timber, nor apparently an hour's work had been devoted to its construction beyond what was absolutely required. But then it had been intended as a dwelling for the poor, and it is well known that some poor can generally be found who are glad of cheap shelter, whether it be habitable or not. This cottage was far from being the worst of its kind; on the ground floor it had a kitchen, and behind that was another small apartment which was adorned with a one-pane window, and was too large for a cupboard, and yet it seemed mockery to call it "a room." An "open" flight of stairs stood in the main room and led to the floor above, which ingenuity had contrived to make into two sleeping apartments, greatly by the aid of a partition of rough boards and old newspapers pasted thereon.

Abigail had an activity which, for a woman of her years, would be thought exceptional in many districts, but among her race and in her country such a state is by no means uncommon. She might yet be caught in the act of running, when in a hurry; she was guiltless of after-dinner naps—never having been accustomed to them; and though she was often "kept on her legs all day," she never thought the fact worth mentioning.

But this latter state of increased employment only began when the spare bedroom found an occupant. This apartment had long been scrupulously kept in an "on view" condition, for in one of William's ruminations while at work, it had struck him that a lodger would be a help to their dwindling income. The idea was communicated to Abigail, who very pleasantly concurred, as she usually did when her husband suggested; "she had often thought of the same plan," she said.

But for a long while, opportunity—that dreadful obstacle to the perfectings of many good intentions and brilliant ideas—stood in the way of the proposed repair to income. No houseless wanderer suitable, or removing lodger, could be heard of. In this matter the Yoys had suffered one or two disappointments. At the educational period of Abigail's life, the English language had not been

necessarily taught in the Welsh elementary schools as is the custom now. The native tongue being decidedly predominant, and English being equally foreign at that time, Abigail in her seventy-second year could speak the language of her forefathers, and that only—when two sentences, six words in all, of English is excepted. This is easily understood, when it is considered that people of the Yoys class are scarcely likely to pick up a new language in their mature years. William, in the manner of men, had in his early days moved about and mixed with those of both races, and thus had gained a knowledge of English which was sufficient for his requirements; but he had never felt equal to the task of giving his wife a lesson in this linguistic attainment.

The migration into Wales of people from over the border, had been very extensive during half-a-century, as may be expected, and at the time with which we are now concerned there were many resident or visiting, at Llanrwst, who were unacquainted with the Welsh tongue. Whilst the lodger was being hoped for, several men, on different occasions, called at the cottage of the Yoys, when William was neither in the house nor at his forge, and while Abigail was alone. She understood not their speech, nor they hers; and she was apt to make this circumstance fit in with her desire. She was hoping for a lodger, and took every unintelligible male visitor to be an intended one. So, hurriedly saying something that was intensely bewildering to the Englishman, she would hurry out of the house and away down the street. This proceeding was, to say the least, puzzling to the visitor, who perhaps merely called to make an enquiry, or to offer some goods for sale, or to "push" a life insurance; and after waiting in wonder for a minute or two, he would probably walk away and go about his business.

Abigail meanwhile had been rushing about the town in an excited way, intent upon finding her husband, that he might talk with her visitor or at least interpret to her, for that it was a perspective lodger she had little doubt. William, sharing in the excitement, would hurry back to the cottage before the news was well told to him. Then it was a curious sight, even for quaint Llanrwst; the old man making all speed through the streets, and his partner, now very scant of breath, trying to keep pace with him; and both with a look of anticipation on the face. And it was almost pitiful to see them directly after, when they were sitting exhausted on the square wooden chairs of the cottage, their looks expressing disappointment, caused by the unknown visitor having departed during their absence, leaving his mission an irritating mystery.

Of course, this trouble only prevailed when William Yoys was not in the immediate vicinity of his own home. When he was occupied in the little workshop, no caller was allowed to get away without being understood; for Abigail, with a fleetness astounding in one so old, was quickly from the house to the shop, and as quickly returned with her husband at her heels. Their hope was one day rewarded, and a visitor, whose appearance and speech seemed foreign in the eyes of the housewife, proved to be a seeker for lodgings, and that same day became an inmate of their house.

This dweller among the Yoys soon found it

necessary to exercise much pantomimic action. It was often desirable that he should communicate his wishes to his landlady, and it was speedily apparent that the tongue of neither was of the slightest use towards a mutual understanding, except as far as the word "tea" went. And that article's name may well be known in more languages than one by the toilers of rural Wales, when it is their drink at almost every meal. This habit has not so pernicious an effect as some would expect, for the usual decoction has so much water and so little tea that the nerves do not find it a very strong enemy. But Mrs. Yoys' lodger was content to drink tea once a day—an abstinence which Abigail could not understand—and so this one word, though very useful, was not applicable to all his instructions. If William was not at hand to undertake the rôle of interpreter, it was indeed difficult work to inform the old lady that roast shoulder of mutton with baked potatoes and certain vegetables were desired for three o'clock that day. Pantomimic gestures, even aided by the presence of the mutton and the clock, were not an easy mode of communication, though often successful, and found to improve on practice. However, Abigail had great faith in the efficacy of her old habit, and when the prolonged gesticulation could not be *read* by her, she gave a few waves of the arms and bobs with the head, and made all speed in search of her husband. These departures were at first inexplicable to the lodger, who was obliged to wait till the woman's return, or run the risk of having his dinner spoiled and incomplete; it was very awkward, too, when there was a certain train and imperative business in view.

But these peculiarities of the Yoys, unlike those of many people, brought no harm with them; and if the good old people *had* failings, they were such as "lean'd to virtue's side."

The small addition to income that accompanied the lodger's advent was a great help; it allowed the old nail-maker to suspend work an hour earlier occasionally, when he found that his strength had stood sufficient strain for the day. And also by its aid they put carefully away in an old ebony box, whose place was on the mantel-shelf, small sums, when such could be spared, designed for use in a time of greater need.

But this comparative good fortune did not endure for long, and one day the lodger announced his impending departure, for business was taking him to another town without expectation of return to Llanrwst. So the young man said farewell and went away, but no one came to take his place in the Yoys' household.

On one bright day in the summer, a youthful gentleman, dressed in tourist garb, which was "cut" in style far nearer the latest fashion than Llanrwst could have furnished, was making inquiries in the street wherein our old couple dwelt. Very soon he got to the door of the farthest cottage, and his knock at the open portal was answered by Abigail. The stranger was ignorant of Welsh, and of his introductory speech the old woman could only understand the one word, "Yoys," to which she replied by many energetic and smiling nods. The man took this as an affirmative answer to his query, and went on to say more. In this he got far beyond Abigail, and she made the usual animated gesture, by which she tried to say,

"Wait a minute, if you please;" and then she trotted off to find her husband, who not long before had dressed himself in his better-day suit, and had gone on an errand by which he hoped to dispose of some produce of his labour. The stranger was out upon his annual holiday tour, and having chosen North Wales as the ground for his ramblings this year, he was passing through Llanrwst by coach; and thinking he would like to spend an hour or so in the little town, he had alighted with the intention of waiting until the coming of the next vehicle that would carry him by the route he wished to go. He was from a Lancastrian town, and was a solicitor by profession and an idler by inclination. At times he was suddenly seized with a desire to be energetic and play havoc with work, and this feeling often lasted for quite fifteen minutes. During his short stay in Llanrwst, he had remembered the case of a client of theirs who had been a native of the principality, and who had died in his adopted town in Lancashire, leaving the surplus of many years prudent trading and living, but no visible heir, and no will by which the disposal of the property could be directed. The tourist knew sufficient of the business of the firm in which he held his junior partnership to remember that advertisements had failed to discover the required heir. The client had died at an advanced age, and it was supposed—and no doubt rightly—that in the passage of years he had outlived or lost sight of all his kinsfolk. In the gust of energy that had come upon the tourist on this bright summer day was this idea:—

"How smart it would be if I were to find that old fellow's rightful heir during this outing?; and I suppose there will be some relation living in this country, unless the whole stock has died out." He really thought himself a clever and a learned young man; and he was clever in some ways (with a billiard cue for instance), and he knew a great deal about the degrees of quality of those fermented liquors on which duty is claimed. In the exercise of his smartness he began to make inquiries, and after asking about half a dozen people if they knew the name of "Yoys" in that town, he was directed to the nail-maker's abode. Before he reached the proper street (which, as already explained, was not in a holiday quarter) the maximum length of life of his fitful energy was almost reached, added to which was the fear of missing his coach. On hearing that a Yoys did live in the town he had found great faith, but on reaching the dwelling the faith evaporated—for no especial reason, beyond that it was the nature of this man's mind to quickly change. And when Abigail made the unintelligible exclamations and then disappeared, the young solicitor laughed at the seeming strangeness of the woman, and waited for awhile with impatience and disgust. The old body not returning quickly he walked to the end of the street, and finding her not in view, he went to the rendezvous of the coaching tourists, and in five minutes had ceased to think of the intestate client, and in ten minutes more he was being driven out of the town of Llanrwst, bound for the pass of Llanberis, via Bettwys-y-Coed and Capel Curig. Meanwhile the wife had returned, close on the heels of her husband. But the visitor had only added one more to the Yoys's list of irritating mysteries.

The junior partner spent his holiday time gaily, and did not overtax his working powers even after his return home; but for some considerable time (his moments of energy included) he never gave one thought to the case of Mr. Yoys, deceased.

Evil days, which had not the excuse of being retributive, began to fall upon the poor old people. Every week brought a perceptible increase in the unsteadiness of William's hands, as with his tongs he drew the hot iron from the forge, and slowly and with bad aim tried to strike it into shape. And every week the old shrunken arms became more prone to fatigue, and had oftener need for rest.

The affinity between the aged pair seemed so sympathetic, that as with William so it was with Abigail. Both appeared to decay in unison; and both had the same sad thoughts. What would be their condition when the strength for labour was gone? And from whence was the needful nourishment to come, then? Such as these were weary thoughts for a quiet and loving old couple, who had been thrifty and careful, but who unfortunately had never found the opportunity to make provision for days of rest from work. But they were thoughts of too great moment to be easily banished, and the shadow of them grew until at last the substance they represented came, like a dark oppressive cloud. Gaunt want entered the cottage. Decay of physical power had laid William on his couch. The little stock of money that had been put aside during the lodger's days, and had since been hoarded as though it were precious life itself, was soon exhausted. Then little by little the most portable of the household goods, those of ornamentation first, those of use afterwards, were turned into cash.

Still the old man lay bedridden, and the forge stood cold and unused.

Then the belief came to them that they must look elsewhere for support, and they turned to the only succour that seemed open to them—the help that the poor-law granted to the needy. This was not applied for until it was plainly the only refuge from the cruelty of starvation.

But the poignancy of our troubles are seldom rightly estimated by those who merely listen to a recital of them. The guardians of the poor thought that the offer of "the house" would best meet the requirements of the case. But this was a worthless gift to William and Abigail, for the poor-house law allows not the companionship which is the privilege of matrimony elsewhere. One ward for men, another for women: this is the rule to which a pauper must submit. I am not impeaching the justice of this rule, nor the wisdom of those who framed it; but it was a hardship—it was an impossibility—a defeating of the end by the means, in the case of William and Abigail.

These old people were not made of that hard unsensitive stuff of which it is desirable (for his own comfort) that the poor man, much less the pauper, should be moulded. They had lived together to within a few weeks of fifty years; in its self a good life of mutual humble love and devotion; to part them now, and let each live, would be a cruelty to them no less great than lingering starvation.

But if a question of the preference ever existed in the minds of the Yoys, it did not dwell there for long. They could not accept the offer, they

said, and pointed out the reason ; and hoped their case would be favoured with a reconsideration.

The reconsideration was slight, and brought no advantage to the Yoys. Guardians have usually a trustful faith in their own decisions.

The indigent couple met with much kindness from various neighbours; but such acts naturally dwindled as time went on, and though there were some continuous efforts to mitigate the want and sorrow, poverty accelerated decay, and the old man seemed to be drifting towards the end of his troubles. If he could live in comfort, with full nourishment, he might likely enough enjoy life for many more years, the doctor said.

"But I cannot work, and there is no one to gif to us," said poor William, sorrowfully.

"No friends?" asked the doctor.

"I not know of any; they all are lost."

The man of medicine sighed with a twofold pity, for the old couple's trouble, and for his own prospect of ultimate payment.

In the midst of a fine summer afternoon, an elderly gentleman alighted at the Llanrwst railway station, and took a seat in a 'bus that plied between station and town. His face bore a resemblance to that of the young tourist of energetic moments, of which the explanation is easy, for one was father to the other.

"If that foolish boy of mine had just taken the number and name of the street," the old gentleman was thinking, "he would probably have spared me a stoppage here. But I doubt if he would have mentioned the circumstance had he not known that I was coming to the district. Dear, dear! And he knowing the trouble I've taken to get the matter settled. I hope I may find some of them here."

When he alighted at the town he made an inquiry. "No, I don't know the name," said the person appealed to; "but that gentleman crossing towards here, he's a doctor, and would be as likely to know as any."

"Yoys!" said the doctor. "Yes, I know the people." He looked at the gentleman with a slight appearance of curiosity, and then remarked: "I'll walk with you and point out the house, which is not easy to find from directions, if you don't object. The fact is, they are patients of mine, but I've been busy lately and — a —."

So they walked on together.

When they reached the cottage the door was closed, and all within seemed very silent. The doctor, instead of making his usual brisk entry, almost paused—he knew not why—and then knocked gently, opened the door, and walked in. The stranger waited at the portal, but not for long, for the other returned soon, alone and with a pale face. The physician made movement with his lips and beckoned the visitor in.

It was a strange sight, sad but peaceful. On the couch that had been brought from the upper room in order that it might be handier for Abigail's attendance, were laid side by side, with an arm of each in embrace, the forms of William and his wife. There was a grey look on the face of both, but the expression was calmer than it had been for many weeks, as though some trouble had just been relieved. Neither the physician nor the visitor retired at the sight, as they would have done had they thought this was a sleep of mere refreshment. But the doctor made haste to settle his fears, and the other stood in astonishment.

"My science is of no use here."

"What is it? Suicide?"

"Oh no," said the doctor; "natural decay, and trouble, and want, I suppose."

But these meagre words do not explain such a passing away.

"Poor souls! How sad!" said the man of law, as he turned to the uncovered deal table upon which stood a large book, open at the first page.

"The family Bible. And the fly-leaf made a register. William Yoys, son of —. Why this is the very man I want, the nephew of our client. And here is the date of their marriage. Dear, dear me! How strange! Just fifty years to-day."

It was their golden wedding.

THE FROG.

If we were asked to state why the frog is so little admired, we should be inclined to say that he looks too much of a philosopher to be generally appreciated in a world where folly is more esteemed than wisdom. Most people vote him a dull, hateful fellow; in fact, company for nobody. This opinion, based on error, helps to keep the little jumping gentleman from receiving the notice and favour he so well deserves. His friends are few indeed, and as for lady admirers, it is doubtful if he has ever had one. Instead of regarding his intelligence and varied parts with affection, the fair sex reject him as a whole, and show their detestation by screaming and jumping whenever he approaches, let his intentions be ever so good. An ardent lover himself, he has much reason to complain of such heartless treatment. No wonder he seems melancholy and despondent at times, but "hop" is his motto, so in spite of every repulse he goes on hopping to the last.

We know that nothing succeeds in love like a dauntless spirit, and of this Mr. Frog supplies a very good illustration. On a fine evening in spring, should you happen to pass a reedy pool, you will probably hear him singing an amorous ditty, a proof in itself of how successful he has been. His musical powers are perhaps not of the highest order, but as the duet kept up by himself and his partner is evidently very gratifying to themselves, that is everything. Like certain other poets and musicians they don't want your appreciation; their song is the outcome of an ecstasy of soul which is denied to the vulgar, and therefore not to be comprehended by such. Croak, croak, croak, goes one. How delightful! exclaims the other, with a croak, croak, croak. What a waste of music! would be the cynic's natural comment. Not at all. Draw near to the pool, and the cause of so much rejoicing will at once become manifest. Very likely there is a host of frogs just showing their heads above the surface of the water. See how earnest they appear; how bright their eyes shine: can their excitement be all about nothing? Your intrusion brings the concert to a sudden termination; in a hurry-scarry fashion the vocalists pop below to hide themselves among the reeds or grass. But what is the transparent jelly-like substance, dotted with specks, suspended in the water? There! the secret is out. The interesting event which the frogs were celebrating, the advent of another

generation, is wrapped up in that slimy material. If all goes well each of those specks will grow into a frog. As every female produces something near 1,200 of these eggs, the frogs surely had a right to feel glad, when some other parents make such a fuss over one solitary little stranger.

With the exception of plumage a bird is perfect as soon as hatched. Not so in the case of a baby frog. It passes through several stages before arriving at the perfect state. In the first place the egg becomes marked with little furrows, showing the vital power at work within. Next a tiny lump of jelly-like life emerges, and by means of a sucker, clings to a convenient plant. Later on gills and a tail are evolved, in which condition the youngster is a fish, having the appearance of a large dot with a long tail. At this stage he flits about through the water, now under the name of a tadpole. The next change is the formation of a pair of hind legs, which are soon followed by a pair of front limbs. In the meantime the tail is absorbed, the mouth gradually widens, the gills disappear, and in future the creature breathes through lungs, which have been slowly developing to take the place of the discarded breathing apparatus of a fish. From that time froggy is more at home on the land than in the water. Before he is as big as a bean, he sets out on a tour, along with a host of friends and relations, to see what the world is like. In warm moist weather, "personally conducted parties" of such vast multitudes are seen, that some country people, to account for their numbers, believe in "frog showers." The neighbourhood of pools is fairly alive with them when an exodus takes place. Each little fellow, greatly to his credit, starts in life on his own account, without ever getting so much as a "shove" from his parents, for after the rays of the sun hatches him, he is independent of all aid.

Having no ribs to keep his chest distended, the perfect frog breathes in a peculiar manner. He forces the air down in a series of gulps, and gasps and puffs with his efforts like an asthmatic sufferer. His adaptation for an amphibious existence, has certain disadvantages, and this is one of them. But then he has several compensating gifts. He can absorb air through his skin, and on the same principle he has the power of drinking in water all over his body. He is a "wet customer" truly, for he sometimes imbibes a quantity equal to his own weight. On being disturbed he frequently shows his indignation and lightens himself at the same time by ejecting a portion of his supply at the intruder. Formerly the emitted fluid was thought to be poisonous, but viper though he is, he possesses no poisonous properties. He has neither sting nor fangs to be hurtful. Of teeth he boasts a great number, about eighty; however, having no particular use for them, they are very rudimentary. His food, insects of different kinds, he swallows without mastication. Who, to look at him, would fancy that he is an expert fly-catcher? One might wonder how he caught them. No person would give him credit for half his artfulness. He has been known to turn over on his back and roll himself in fine dry mould, so as to give himself the appearance of a lump of earth, and thus, to deceive the poor flies, lie in wait near a spot where they had discovered some favourite morsel of food.

As each alights it disappears mysteriously in an instant. If the grinning rascal was asked to explain the trick, especially when in an obliging mood, he would probably put his tongue out. This organ is of such unusual length that it has to be doubled up in his mouth, except at feeding time. The tip is covered with a sticky secretion, which, on striking against an insect, makes it fast, to be plunged down the captor's throat with lightning speed.

As a jumper the frog stands unrivalled. He leaps about fifty times his own length at one bound. To equal him a man would have to clear three hundred feet, and spring a hundred in height.

Wonderful stories are published from time to time, alleging that a living frog has been met with in a crevice, at a great depth in the earth, where it must have existed for thousands of years without food. Sometimes these sensational specimens are, as far as assertion goes, discovered at the bottom of coal pits, and again in stone quarries. The frog has a surprising knack undoubtedly of how not to shuffle off this mortal coil, still, although he can live through adverse circumstances better than most other creatures, the impossible is beyond him. When he has been found in strange places, as he has often been, there is little doubt he must have had food brought to him, probably along with infiltrated rain. That he could not otherwise live has been proved by cruel experiments, carried out by Dr. Buckland and others. The gentleman named selected toads for his ill-used subjects; but the relationship between them and the frog is so close that the results will apply to both. He placed twelve toads in twelve separate holes cut in blocks of soft limestone, and also another twelve in blocks of hard, flinty sandstone. Each of the twenty-four cells was then covered with a piece of glass, which was cemented to its stone. The imprisoned toads were next buried three feet in the earth. At the same time four more were deposited in holes cut into an apple tree, and shut in with tightly fitting plugs. Four others were put into a plaster of Paris bowl, which was closed up with a luting. In a little over a year the thirty-two reptiles were examined. Every one in the hard stones had died; all in the wood; two in the plaster of Paris; and the other two were in a dying state. Those in the soft limestone fared better. Although the smallest had succumbed, some of the surviving ones appeared to be in quite a healthy condition, and two were actually fatter than when they were put in. It is supposed that water had filtrated through the porous stones, and insects had certainly penetrated into one cell. The survivors were sealed up for another twelve months, at the end of which time none were alive.

In turning from the toad as a martyr to science, it may be worthy of remark that the frog has also been the means of elucidating some obscure scientific points. His transparent skin reveals the circulation of the blood, a beautiful provision of Nature for renovating the system, which might be disputed as a theory were we unable to see the actual work performed by the heart, shown so clearly in the reptile's foot. In addition to this, he is the father of galvanism, a very high honour surely, since it has won favour as a healing art.

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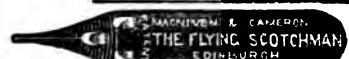
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MY UNCLE'S HOBBY.

BY C. J. BILLSON.

—
I

"REGINALD," said my uncle one morning after breakfast, "Rose d'Agincourt is coming to stay with us to-morrow."

I suppose that most young fellows, shut up in a dull country house, with no companions except a scientific uncle and a faded aunt, would have been possessed by extravagant delight upon hearing of the approaching visit of a bright Devonshire maiden. You will begin to understand the unnaturalness of my position when I tell you that I was not. At my uncle's announcement my heart sank like lead. The fear of his hobby was upon me.

"Her father was a fine knightly soul," continued my uncle, "and her mother was distinctly a clever woman. General d'Agincourt, her uncle, was the handsomest man I ever saw. I am inclined to waive a certain ancestor in the maternal line, who is reported to have been a valetudinarian and a bore; and as to Miss d'Agincourt's great aunt, Lady Somers, who was undoubtedly a creature of weak intellect, there is a trustworthy tradition of a fall in the nursery, which will dispose of the supposition of any hereditary taint."

These remarks of my uncle terrified me. I waited anxiously, but I knew what was coming. Taking his pipe from his lips with that meditative gesture which I knew so well, he proceeded.

"My researches into the life-history of the family have been, upon the whole, satisfactory. I now propose to devote seven days to the analysis of the young lady herself. At the end of a week, if the result of my observations points in that direction, I shall ask you to propose to her."

I expected the blow, but it staggered me nevertheless. Argument, I knew, would be worse than useless.

"But what is she like, uncle?" I asked.

"She will be, as far as I can judge from my present data, of the synthetic order of mind. That is my hope. What you want in a wife, my dear boy, is synthesis. You're so confoundedly analytical; you haven't a spark of imagination in your whole composition. That was your poor mother's fault."

"But, uncle, I meant what is she like personally?"

"She'll be handsome enough for you, you young rogue, I'll be bound. But you will judge for yourself to-morrow. You can take the dog-cart down to Crompton station to meet the five o'clock train. To-day is Thursday; on Saturday week I will tell you if you may propose to her."

My uncle beamed benignantly, and strolled into the garden.

II.

I LOVED no one in the world better than I loved my uncle, the kind old guardian of my boyhood, but ever since I had arrived at man's estate, I lived in dread of his hobby. I was convinced of a sneaking tendency to the romantic in my own disposition which would harmonise ill with his scientific plans for my future, and I shrank from the trouble which I thought was sure to come between us when the time came for the practical working-out of his theories. To listen and assent to his learned dissertations upon heredity was one thing; to marry a girl because the match would dovetail with his principles was quite another. As I drove down to Crompton the next day, I felt that I had already conceived a deep aversion for this young lady who had been selected as a fitting compliment to my existence.

This feeling lasted for half an hour. As soon as the train arrived, and Miss d'Agincourt stepped from her carriage, I began to relent; when I had introduced myself, and heard the music of her replies, I began to like her; and when I handed her into the dog-cart I was in love with her. The

rapidity of my subjection amazed me, for although I had always professed to believe in love at first sight, I had never actually realized the possibility of such an event happening to myself. But now I felt like a newly-awakened Cymon; my soul suddenly expanded with the most delicious sensations I had ever experienced. I cannot describe her. I never could understand how any one dare attempt to reproduce in words the nameless grace of womanhood. Indeed, to make an inventory of her charms would be misleading, for it was not the aggregate sum of her attractions which rendered her so fascinating, but rather the ever-shifting play and variety of their combinations. In a word, she was the most winning young woman I had ever seen.

My dear uncle welcomed her with his usual kindness, mingled with a critical admiration delightful to behold. His hobby had never produced such fruit before! He was very attentive to her during the evening, and indeed monopolized so much of her conversation, that I could not help feeling a little sulky, although I knew that his attentions to her were in my own interest. I knew that, while he was playfully drawing out her various tastes and proclivities, he mentally noted them down for his own purposes; and when I heard her quick-witted replies, I was sure that she must be finding favour in his eyes. But he had the true spirit of scientific investigation, and refused to anticipate. When we were left alone at night, and, brimming over with excitement, I asked his opinion of her, he only answered—

"Well, she seems a sensible girl, and she is certainly a pretty one. She has her father's eyes. Did I ever tell you the story of Philip d'Agincourt and the French marine?"

But I was in no mood for listening to my uncle's yarns, and hastily bade him good-night.

During the week Miss d'Agincourt and I walked and talked and rode and read together, and my life was raised to a very high pressure. One look from those deep eyes could raise me to a state of ecstatic happiness or plunge me into the depths of misery. How delightful were such possibilities in comparison with the monotony of my previous existence! Is not love like Captain White's Oriental pickle, "a most delicious combination of sweets and sour?" I could not help fancying that Rose was "not altogether indifferent to me," as modest young men say in novels; but the uncertainty, and the alternations of hope and fear, plagued me terribly, and made me uncommonly glad when the Saturday arrived on which my uncle had promised to pronounce his verdict. What that verdict would be I had no doubt; for my uncle was evidently fascinated by the girl he had undertaken to analyse, and I could hardly think that, after the first evening, he had had the heart to dissect her.

III.

"WELL, Reginald," said my uncle, smoking his after-breakfast pipe upon that Saturday morning, "my observations of Rose d'Agincourt were soon completed. She is a good, honest, sensible, and practical little woman."

My ears tingled with delight.

"Yes, uncle; and you wish me to——"

"I don't wish you to do anything except make yourself civil to the girl so long as she remains here. Of course I am rather disappointed that she has turned out so different from what I expected, but we must look elsewhere. I don't mean to say that I regret her visit here, for she is a very pleasant soul to have about the house—a delightful little body. I think we have all enjoyed her company."

"But uncle," I gasped, "you said she is so sensible and good, and I am sure she is both. What objection can there be to her? I think one might go farther and fare worse," I added with a foolish laugh.

"My dear boy," replied my uncle, taking his pipe from his lips and proceeding to mount his hobby, "she is an excellent woman, an admirable woman. She would make a capital wife for a poet or a novelist. I think of asking Tom Woodbird down to meet her. If I could marry those two, it would be a beautiful match. Of course I must give up all thoughts of mating her with a practical fellow like you; such a marriage could produce nothing but the commonplace. You have neither of you one iota of imagination. It is a disappointment to me, I confess; for, personally, I like the girl very much, and everything else is in her favour."

I could restrain myself no longer.

"Uncle," I cried, "I hope you're not serious, because I—I'm in love with her!"

"I thought you seemed rather smitten," said my uncle, with the most aggravating coolness, "but the feeling will soon pass away. As for your being 'in love' with her, even you must see that such a thing is psychologically absurd. You know very well how often I have told you that it is only the attraction of opposites which produces any real and lasting attachment. Now, there cannot possibly be any such attraction between two equally sensible persons, like Rose and you."

"I'm not sensible, uncle; I write poetry."

"What!" exclaimed my uncle, bounding out of his chair as if he had been shot. "Is that true, Reginald? That would alter the case, indeed. But it's impossible. Some moralizing doggrel—eh? Good solid matter of fact cut into longs and shorts. Ah, my dear Reginald, that isn't poetry!"

Now, I was not a little vain of the results of my surreptitious courtship of the Muses, and these remarks chafed me.

"I don't mean to say that I have written anything first-rate, but I hope it's better than you suppose."

"Well, well," said my uncle, with that kindly incredulous smile of his, "bring your verses to me to-night, and I'll look at them. And now go into the garden and play croquet with Rose."

IV.

Was ever budding poet placed in such a situation? The happiness of my life hung upon the power of my verse. It was with feverish impatience that I opened the desk which held my little store of honey, and sat down to select a sample for my uncle's palate. Dear me, what

poor stuff it was! Surely I had known flashes of fancy, and experienced the poet's frenzy, or could it have been only the frenzy for scribbling? With a sinking heart I chose three or four of my most cherished productions, and took them with me to show to my uncle after dinner.

When the ladies had retired, I gulped down a glass of claret, and produced the MS. from my pocket.

My uncle took them with a smile which really tried my strong affection for him, promising to look at them before bed-time. He had evidently no faith in my poetical genius.

Rose was more fascinating that evening than she had ever been before. She sang "My mother bids me bind my hair" with so sweet a manner that the tears came into my eyes. How I wished that I had expressed myself better in that "Ode to the Great Bear!" And yet I cherished a secret hope of my uncle's conversion.

Alas! I was doomed to disappointment.

"I wouldn't waste any more time over this sort of thing," said the cruel critic, handing me back my precious MS. "It's not in your line, my boy. Try trigonometry. By-the-way, my dear," he added, turning to my aunt, "I shall be glad if you will drop a note to Woodbird, and ask him to come to us on Tuesday."

Then I lost my temper. I told my uncle that I had sworn by the nine gods to marry Rose d'Aigincourt, and that nothing on earth should prevent my proposing to her, least of all a ridiculous subservience to crotchetts that were all moonshine. She was the only woman I could ever love, and I would never marry any girl to point a theory or adorn a scientific treatise.

"You should not speak of science in that way, my boy," said my uncle very gravely. "When you are older you will see matters in another light;" and all my wrath broke in vain upon his placid front.

Before I went to bed that night I was firmly resolved to propose to Rose the next day, "before that warbling idiot Woodbird comes upon the scene," I muttered to myself.

The next morning, however, brought less precipitate counsels. I felt that I could not offend my uncle. Not only was I to some extent dependent upon my guardian, but I was also deeply attached to him, and I was aware that the only proper course to pursue was to endeavour to alter his wish. The hobby must be attacked. After the pitiful failure of my poetic effusions to alter his opinion of me, any further efforts in that direction would be useless. I longed to startle him with some wild and weird fictions of my creative fancy, but found myself quite unable to concoct any. And so I drifted on irresolutely, until Tuesday came, and brought Tom Woodbird to stay with us.

V.

WOODBIRD was not at all of an unpleasant species of poet. He had not been soured by the vanity of human wishes any more than ordinary people who are unable to pen their aspirations. He did not seem at all addicted to mooning, but entered heartily into everything that was going forward,

and, when he saw how matters stood between Rose and me, he most honourably refrained from any poaching upon my preserves. So much was I pleased with this delicacy that I resolved to take him into my confidence. As he was a poet, a being "of imagination all compact," he would doubtless be able to imagine some scheme for attacking my uncle's hobby. I was not disappointed. It is true that he embraced the situation with an Olympian roar of laughter, which somewhat outraged my sympathies, until I remembered the privilege which superior men possess of looking on the humorous side of things, and I did not take offence. He made very light of the hobby, and promised me that my uncle should be won over in a few days.

"It is not the first time," he said, "that I have done battle with the subjects of Queen Entelecheia, 'et militavi non sine gloria.'"

The allusion to Rabelais was beyond me, but I had learnt enough Latin at Eton to construe the quotation from Horace, and felt much relieved at having secured so excellent a champion. What his plan of attack was he would not tell me, and he made me promise to leave everything in his hands, and to wait patiently until the enemy surrendered. I cannot say that I waited patiently, for I was burning with anxiety to know what would happen, but I refrained from any interference. The campaign was unexpectedly brief. On the very day after my conversation with Woodbird, whilst I was indulging my melancholy in the garden, I saw my uncle coming towards me with a glow on his face that made my heart leap.

"Reginald," he said, laying his hand upon my shoulder, and speaking in an excited way very different from his habitual manner; "go at once and ask Rose to be your wife: she is in the conservatory alone. Heaven grant that she may say yes!"

What were my feelings do you think? Oh, the joy, the uncertainty, the despondency! If she should refuse me? Ah, now I began to see upon what slight hopes I had built my foolish castle in the air! Never did a man prepare for a surgical operation certain either to kill or cure him with more painful emotions than I went to put my fate to the touch. How it all happened I do not know. From the time at which I entered the conservatory to the time when Rose and I left it together swimming in a dream of mutual happiness, I can only remember distinctly my words, "Do you care for me?" and her precious answer, "Yes."

We went to my uncle, who blessed us with tears in his eyes: there were not three happier individuals in the world. The afternoon glided away in rapture. The hobby was forgotten; and it was not until the evening that I had any thought of gratitude to Woodbird, or curiosity as to the reason of my uncle's sudden change of front.

VI.

"You must give up writing poetry, my dear, when you're married," said my uncle to Rose, as we were taking coffee in the drawingroom.

"Oh, I could never write a line of poetry!" she answered blushing. "Uncle—for I must always call you uncle—I see I must make a confession.

Will you ever forgive me? It was all Mr. Woodbird's doing. Those verses which I showed you this morning were never written by poor me! Did you really think that I could have written them? It was all a little conspiracy between Mr. Woodbird and me. He wrote them for the *Grosvenor Magazine*, and said he wanted a perfectly unbiased opinion of them, so I promised to give them to you without telling you who wrote them, but pretending they were mine, as if I could write poetry! And I didn't tell you, Mr. Woodbird, how pleased he was with them. He said they actually showed—what was it, uncle?—'synthetic imagination?' Oh, you dear uncle, did you really think I had any 'synthetic imagination?' I'm afraid you will be so disappointed with me!"

So this was the secret of my uncle's conversion! I looked at Woodbird, who was sitting with a comical twinkle in his eye, intensely relishing the situation. As for my uncle, his face was a study. A battle was going on in his heart between the hobby and his affection for Rose and myself. Science and love together puckered up his face into the most grotesque complex expression of annoyance and satisfaction. But his kindly nature proved too strong for the resistance of his crotchets, and he submitted. He rose from his seat, and, going up to Rose, kissed her upon the forehead and said—

"I shall never be disappointed with you, dear Rose. You have won my heart, as well as Reginald's."

And so the hobby was vanquished. When I told Rose the whole story, she was at first rather concerned at her innocent part in the conspiracy; for it appeared to her feminine sensitiveness a cruel thing to deceive my uncle in anything, and she was not satisfied until he had been informed of Woodbird's wickedness. But my uncle was so pleased with the result that he readily forgave the means by which it had been obtained. Our marriage took place after a short engagement, and we have taken up our quarters not far from my old home. We do not forget, when we are obliged to listen to the kind scientist's discourses, which become longer and more prosy as the years pass over his head, that we owe all our happiness to "My Uncle's Hobby."

••••

GOLDEN DAYS.

BY COULSON KERNAHAN, F.R.G.S.

I.

TWAS summer-time, and the skies were blue,
The corn was turning a deeper hue;
On far-off mountains no shade or mist,
Save where their summits the cloudlands kissed.
The world was fair, and the trees were clad
In rustling green, and my heart was glad;
My heart was glad when I saw Athy,
The sad grey town—their weeks flew by;
And my heart is heavy, I know not why,
And my thoughts go back with a yearning cry
To the silent town, the sad old town,
The grey old town of Athy.

II.

'Tis autumn now, and the mournful rain,
In fitful gusts 'gainst the window-pane
Monotonous weeps those "golden days,"
Beyond recalling; the gaunt tree sways
With branches sere, as if groping, blind,
Its fallen leaves in the night to find;
Backward and forward it sweeps again,
In sullen time to the sad refrain
Of the wailing wind and the dreary rain;
And my heart is heavy, I know not why,
And my thoughts go back with a yearning cry
To the silent town, the sad old town,
The grey old town of Athy.

III.

A peaceful stillness pervades Athy;
On cloudless nights with a moonlit sky,
The silent houses stand white and cold,
Like the drowsy stones in a churchyard old.
Far away in the distance lie
Sunny slopes where the clouds have cast
Sailing shadows that slumber past,
As they float o'er far-off mountains high.
Oft in dream I behold again
Cloud-bound mountain and sun-clad plain;
And my heart is heavy, I know not why,
And my thoughts go back with a yearning cry
To the silent town, the sad old town,
The grey old town of Athy.

IV.

There is a river runs through Athy,
Silvery lilies of golden eye
Rest on its surface. The green leaves lie
Motionless, still, on its placid breast,
Calm as the face of the dead at rest.
I think I see as I sit and dream
The wand-like rushes that fringe the stream;
The kindly tree that has stooped to rest
Its fragrant load on the water's breast;
The cool retreat that its branches screen;
The sunlight glinting amid the green.
I see in the picture my dreams have made
A boat that nestles beneath its shade;
Glad young faces before me rise,
Rippling tresses and laughing eyes,
And I seem to hear in my silent room,
Rising and falling amid the gloom,
Clear, fresh voices that join in song,
With theplash of oars as they glide along.
Voices are still, and my dream is flown,
And I am left in the night alone;
And my heart is heavy, I know not why,
And my thoughts go back with a yearning cry
To the silent town, the sad old town,
The grey old town of Athy.

v

Ah, Golden Days! ye have passed away,
Yet a twilight memory, cold and grey,
Ghostlike gleams in my wearied breast,
Like the wan, weird light in the waning West;
And my heart is heavy, I know not why,
And my thoughts go back with a yearning cry
To the silent town, the sad old town,
The grey old town of Athy.

THREE OFFERS.

BY E. CHILTON,
Author of "Wade's Daughter," &c.

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT IS LOVE WORTH?"

"M R. EG Mont."

The dining-room, where Mr. Duberg and his god-daughter sat at luncheon, was very silent and cool. Was it the sudden change from the glare without, that made Cicely seem so pale? There was no glow, no sudden lighting of the eyes; the hand which Egmont pressed, as he took it in his own, made no response, calmly withdrawing itself.

"Thank you, I won't have anything; we breakfasted so late. I only came over to see how you were after your fatigues."

He addressed himself to Mr. Duberg; but his eyes, half-puzzled, half-questioning, turned to Cicely. Cicely looked straight before her.

"Well, we cannot burn the candle at both ends," said Mr. Duberg; "such at least is my present experience. I have had my day, as well as others. You young men—to you it does not matter. You look as fresh as paint—it depends, by the by, on the age of the paint, the freshness! I hope Lady Anne is none the worse. It is really refreshing, Egmont, in these days, to find a young fellow with so much consideration for his elders. You'll stay and dine?—if you can find anything to do meanwhile. I am much engaged, myself; but Cicely—"

"I am much engaged also," said Cicely; "and Lady Anne will hardly thank us for depriving her of Mr. Egmont, when she is so soon to lose him altogether."

The young man looked as if he could hardly believe his ears. Mr. Duberg laughed.

"Ah! you take after your old godfather," said he, not pausing to consider whether his speech were polite or the reverse. "You don't much care for society. I was afraid she would find old Wilcroft too dull, after all this gaiety," he continued, addressing Kenneth; "but no such thing! She's never so happy as when she is alone with me."

Cicely looked across at her godfather, and smiled; but was instantly cold and grave again. She did not even glance at Egmont. The young man frowned, looking down into his hat.

Luncheon over, she quickly escaped into the garden. But as she sat under her favourite acacia tree, quick steps approached: she had been followed.

"Miss Fenwick—one moment: don't go away! I can't go back like this. What have I done? What has changed you so?"

"Am I changed?" said Cicely. She spoke coldly, but already her heart was melting. The wonderful fascination to which she had yielded herself, believing its object worthy—more than worthy—was stealing back under these altered circumstances. She must conquer it, she must crush it. She despised it and herself.

"Yes, indeed you are changed," said Egmont, passionately: "In one morning—in a few hours.

When I wished you good-night, I thought—No matter. Only just tell me the worst."

"The worst is that—" She paused suddenly, biting her lip, and a flush of colour rushed over her whole face.

"Well, tell me—tell me."

"Why should you care?" asked Cicely, controlling herself. She had risen, standing proudly aloof.

"Why should I care? Cicely, you know—you know—you must have seen for weeks, that I had no thought but you. To confess the truth, I never believed in love before; I never knew what it was, at all events. Ah, I know now, to my cost—to my cost, that is, if—What were you going to say just now? Pray tell me? 'The worst is—'?"

"That you will lose your bet," said Cicely, smiling.

Her smile notwithstanding, she was watching him, secretly hoping that he would look at her in surprise, look his innocence, ask what she meant in a tone proving all a mistake, a libel, a dream—horrible but baseless.

But he started back as if she had struck him, first pale, then burning red. Her heart dropped down within her as lead in the mighty waters.

"What bet?" he said first. Then, as the girl, perfectly controlled, stood silent, her lip still curled in that smile of scorn—"Who told you of it?"—and swore a great oath upon poor Timpy's anonymous head.

"Do not use such awful words!" cried Cicely. "What does it matter who told me? It is true—I see it is true. Oh, I wish I had been brought up as a factory-girl or any kitchen drudge, to earn my own bread, with no false glamour to be a trap for rogues and hypocrites."

She was rushing away, but he caught her dress.

"One moment—I must say one word. What did you call me?"

"I called you nothing."

"You were thinking of me. I may be a rogue—I was one—but I am not a hypocrite. It is true that I loved you from the first moment I saw you—and that now—I could never tell you in words how I love you now."

"What is love worth, then, if that be love? A dream—like all the rest!"

She tore herself away, and fled across the grass into the house, to her own room, where she could lock herself out of sight.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL OVER!

ALAS for poor Cicely's time of roses! How quickly it was over! and its petals were not of the kind which may be treasured in pot-pourri. Its thorns had found their way into her heart, where they had made sore wounds—of disappointment, shame, and mortified pride; soreness heightened by the dreary pain of a young girl's first desolation when she awakens from dreams to find the world not what she thought it.

But she had also, in a strong degree, a young girl's instincts of concealment. She had no notion of taking to her bed, of turning her face to the

wall. As the long summer afternoon—an afternoon branded for ever on her memory—drew to its close, she rose up, bathed her eyes, unlocked her door, put on an undaunted front for the world—of which Timpkins was just now a prominent member. Timpkins was quite relieved by Cicely's high spirits when, as usual, she helped her to dress. By tacit consent, no allusion was made to the morning.

"What a lovely day it has been, Timpy! Only too hot to be out of doors. By the by, this was your niece's wedding-day."

"And the weather made o' purpose, Miss Cicely! I was remarking similar to Jones. But, as we read in the fable, missy, what is sport to one is hanguish to another. I doubt my poor sister feels very middling this evening. I've been thinking all day of that little song of yours—

'There's a crown and a throne for thee, Charlie!
For me a lonely grave.'"

"But there is no chance of a grave for your sister yet, Timpy, I hope, any more than of a crown or a throne for Mary Anne."

"Oh no, missy. Poetically speaking was my intention. Though as to crowns and thrones, Mary Anne has done remarkably well. Mr. Bodines' salary as master of them British schools is £150, if it's a penny; and Mary Anne will have the infants. So they'll be comfortable. I see in my Halbury paper—my poor sister remembered my paper, notwithstanding—they're advertising for a successor to Mary Anne. Leastwise, not a successor, because the under-mistress is gone up into Mary Anne's place—but for one to be under her."

"And when they get one, she had better lodge with your sister, instead of Mary Anne."

"You're quite correct, Miss Cicely. Just what poor sister's thinking of; so long, she says, as her own flesh and blood—that's me, missy—is denied her. She's always on about me a-living with her, but I wrote her last week—'Dear Sister,' I writes, 'if anything should happen to Miss Cicely, to you I would turn; but no,' I writes, 'I must be peremptory; for leave Miss Cicely till she's dead or mar—ahum—I could as soon stop my eyebrows—which has been their nature from a child.'

* * * * *

"Grandpapa," said Cicely, sitting at his feet, as he sipped his after-dinner claret; it was growing dusk, but candles were not lighted, and the windows were open to the softly tinted sky, where the evening star had just awakened: "Grandpapa, why was I never taught some way of earning my living?"

Mr. Duberg laughed in the gentle and indulgent manner in which he was wont to laugh at Cicely.

"Is it usual to teach young ladies ways of earning their living?" said he.

"Perhaps not; but I wish it were; it would be far better."

"Women have no need to work while there are men to work for them, my dear."

"But suppose the men fail them?" said Cicely.

Mr. Duberg moved uneasily in his chair.

"What has put such notions into my foolish little girl's head? You never thought of these things before."

"No, but to-night it seems to me as if—as if I never saw things rightly before. And I have been thinking, grandpapa, how little I know. I don't believe I know half so much as Timpkins's niece, Mary Anne. Mademoiselle went away when I was sixteen, if you remember; and I never did any more lessons. I can paint—or daub—a little on china, but not well enough to sell; and I was always stupid at needlework. I have not enough rough physical strength to be a scullery-maid, and I don't know any other branch of domestic service that I could have the conscience to undertake. In fact, I should be obliged to go to the workhouse."

"You would be obliged—in what case? What do you mean?" said Mr. Duberg, still uneasily.

"I mean, if I had not you, dear grandpapa."

"But you have me."

"Yes, I know; you mustn't think me ungrateful; you know I'm not. I was thinking I would almost rather that, instead of adopting me as your own child, you had brought me up to work for myself, so that I might prove—"

"Prove what, my darling?"

"Oh, nothing," said Cicely abruptly.

The shadows were gathering. She was glad that his elderly eyes could not see her face.

"Cicely, you pain me," said Mr. Duberg, after a long pause; "you make me reproach myself. But I will put it off no longer," he added in an undertone; "it shall be done to-morrow."

"What shall be done?"

"Your future shall be settled, my child, beyond the power of change. Why do you start? I mean nothing to alarm you—nothing but what ought to be done already—what I meant to do long ago; only my unfortunate habit of putting off—"

He sighed heavily.

Cicely stroked his hand as it rested on his knee—a long, white hand, now a little feeble—and laid her cheek upon it.

"Dear grandpapa, you have been always so good and kind to me!" she murmured.

She was thinking that now, throughout her life, she would devote herself to him, have no interests apart from his, strive to repay something of all she owed him. She looked down a long vista of years—twenty, thirty, forty years: he might live forty years yet—he was only fifty; he should, if her care could keep him. And she? How many another antique maiden lady could tell some old tale of youth!

"What did you say, grandpapa?"

"I was remarking, my dear, that your little heart is prouder than I thought it. I may as well tell you—I always meant to tell you, some time—why you need feel it nothing but a matter of course to be provided for by me. You might have been my own child."

His tone was a little tremulous. A sudden light of understanding flashed upon Cicely. She kissed the poor hand, in which she had felt a nervous movement as it lay beneath her cheek.

"You are very like your mother, Cicely. It is just her face as I used to see it when I rode over in those long vacations. Her father was my tutor, a poor clergyman. I was a rich young fellow, and I did not like to vex my mother, who had other views for me. But I never thought of any one else—and I think she knew it. She knew it once; perhaps, afterwards—"

He paused, and again sighed heavily.

"Yes, that unfortunate habit of putting off," he repeated—"I have warned you against it, Cicely! And I was weak—I know it. If I had summoned resolution, my mother. . . . But never mind! Well! it is five-and-twenty years ago now since her father died. I was abroad, and never knew of it for months. An old lady was very kind to her; took her in, and when I came home at last, I found that she was going to marry the son. Some said it was from gratitude to the mother; and some—. Well, I had dangled on a long time, and there had been gossip, bringing in her name; perhaps her pride was touched—she was proud like you. . . . They say marriages are made in heaven. I'm sure love is! Twenty-three and a half years since she became your father's wife! and I could never forget her."

"Dear, dear grandpapa," murmured Cicely.

"She died less than two months after your birth. I saw her in her coffin. Ah, I resolved, if she had suffered through me, I would make her child's life happy. To-morrow—the first thing to-morrow."

He rang the bell.

"Jones, desire Davidson to have the cob at the door to-morrow morning at ten o'clock—punctually at ten o'clock. I have important business with Mr. Rhodes."

"Yes, sir."

The servant retired. Cicely, ignorant of business matters, heard as not hearing. Her mind was full of her own thoughts, and of that story of the past. Mr. Duberg relapsed into silent musing.

"How you reminded me of her, last night, Cicely," he said suddenly; "of that last evening before I went abroad! It was at a dance—at least an old-fashioned party: we have no such parties now-a-days. There was dancing and music. After supper she was asked to play. She played Weber's Last Waltz. What a touch she had, to be sure! I turned over her leaves, and—I was just going to speak, just going to tell her: she had seen my eyes, she was blushing: when Linton, he who afterwards married Lady Anne, came up and joined us at the piano. I could have knocked him down at the moment. But—Well! It was my last opportunity."

He rose suddenly, and lighted his candle.

The next morning, before Cicely was dressed, a sealed note was brought to her room. Within, in Mr. Duberg's writing, were these words, enclosing a cheque for fifty pounds—

"A practical pledge to my Cicely of her godfather's promise."

She had to think twice before she understood to what promise the words referred. Then she remembered that he had spoken of important business, to be done to-morrow—now to-day.

She never before had so much money at her disposal.

"What shall I do with it?" she thought, languidly. Her heart was too heavy for planning.

But she hurried her dressing, that she might quickly thank the dear giver. The note was dated, eleven o'clock p.m. It had been found, as she was afterwards told, on the hall table.

As she opened her door she heard in the passage a strange commotion—unwonted steps and voices, stifled sobs. A sudden presentiment seized upon

Cicely. She rushed towards her godfather's room; but was stopped by Timpkins.

"Miss Cicely! Oh, go back! Go back! It is no sight for you."

But Cicely broke from her. The servants, crowding round the half-open door, gave way. She ran in, straight to the bed.

If indeed no sight for her, it was no sight to alarm her. Only the kindly face, which but last night had looked down on her with such affection, lying tranquil on the familiar pillow, as if asleep; only the long white hand which last night she had caressed—a marble hand now resting serenely on the counterpane, stiff in death.

CHAPTER VII.

NO WILL!

It was the eve of the funeral. The heir-at-law had arrived—a distant cousin of Mr. Duberg—a man of middle age, dry of manner and drier at heart: such at least was Cicely's experience of him. She had never seen him before this sad time, but had heard her godfather speak of him with as much dislike as was possible to that kindly nature. Some difference with respect to the entail had arisen between them after the funeral of Duberg's father, and thenceforth they had never met.

"Number One, at any rate, may safely be trusted in Alfred's keeping," Cicely's godfather was wont to observe with a chuckle. He felt a gentle pride in this method of expressing the fact he desired to convey.

Mr. Alfred Duberg, in his turn, had a favourite quotation in reference to the head of his family.

"Answer a fool according to his folly," he would say concisely, when Mr. Duberg was mentioned.

The estate was entailed, but Mr. Duberg was known to have lived greatly within his income, and to have invested large sums in profitable securities. His attachment to the child of his adoption was also universally known, and she was regarded as heiress to some sixty thousand pounds.

"My deary, I'm so sorry to trouble you," said Timpkins, entering Cicely's room on this last evening—the last when she could look upon the beloved face of—as she believed, that faithful servant excepted—her only earthly friend. "But Mr. Rhodes is here, and him and Mr. Alfred, they're begging very particular to see you."

Cicely rose from her bed, on which she had been stretched, exhausted. Ever since that terrible morning, five days before, she had been weeping, weeping, weeping, until it seemed to the pitying servants that she would weep her life away. Since her babyhood her least tear had been a matter of solicitude to him who was now still within a few yards of her, yet who never came to ask for her, to comfort her. How anxious would he have been to comfort her, if he had known! Her tears burst forth afresh at the thought. She knelt beside his bed, and laid her head upon his pillow, and cried to him by the name which he had taught her long ago.

"Grandpapa! oh, dear, dear grandpapa! I want you—I want you—I want you!"

Only by degrees—death was so new to her—could she realize that he did not hear.

As now, in obedience to her nurse's summons, she arose, her eyes were dim, there was a singing in her ears, she only half comprehended the words. Yet mechanically she smoothed her hair, and went downstairs to the study. She dared not look around her: the writing-table, the old buff leather arm-chair, the waste-paper basket, untidy and overflowing, about which she had laughed at him so often, the marble letter-weight which he had made such a point of using because it was her last birthday present—each was now a new pain. She turned rigidly towards the mantelpiece, where the two gentlemen, in close confabulation, were leaning by force of habit, despite the fireless grate.

Mr. Rhodes, her godfather's solicitor, stepped forward. Mr. Alfred Duberg, whom she had already seen that day, merely bowed his head in recognition of her entrance.

"I am exceedingly sorry to trouble you, Miss Fenwick," said Mr. Rhodes; "in fact, I would on no account do so, but from sheer necessity. Pray be seated," he added in parenthesis, touching a chair. Cicely shook her head.

"Have you ever heard our lamented friend speak of making his will?"

No, Cicely never had.

"Or of any written directions respecting the future disposal of—hem—his personal effects?"

"No, never. He had said sometimes that he intended to leave annuities to some of the servants."

"Intended only; he never referred to the deed as done?"

Never.

A dead silence. Mr. Alfred Duberg looked down at the toes of his boots; Cicely could not understand his expression.

"One more question, Miss Fenwick. Do you know of any secret receptacles—private drawers, desks, or the like, where he would be liable to conceal anything?"

"No. None, except what are here." She glanced towards her godfather's old bureau. The key—suspended to that familiar bunch which he was always losing, and getting her to find—was in the lock.

"Why, some one has been at the bureau!" she innocently exclaimed.

"We were searching," said Mr. Rhodes.

"I am at perfect liberty to search anywhere, you understand," said Mr. Alfred Duberg, glancing at her. "I am the master of this house," that glance implied. For the first time Cicely realized the fact. She moved towards the door.

"We need not trouble you any more just now," said Mr. Rhodes, politely opening it.

On the threshold she paused suddenly, and came back.

"I have only just remembered. I did not think of it in connection with this. The evening before—before—"

"The demise," supplied Mr. Rhodes, amiably.

"He ordered his horse to be ready at ten o'clock the next day. He said that he had important business with you."

"Ah!" said Mr. Rhodes.

He too looked down with great solemnity.

Cicely paused still another moment. She had remembered further what Mr. Duberg had said respecting her own future. But although she only half understood, some proud instinct kept her silent. She bestowed a chilly little bow upon Mr. Rhodes, and retired.

Two days later, the tidings flew far and wide that Mr. Duberg had left no will, and that his adopted child—the petted girl, renowned throughout the country as an heiress—was destitute; worse off than the very servants, who, however disappointed, each possessed a bountiful store of savings.

(To be continued.)

AN AULD LICHT OFFICIAL.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

IT was Sneky Hobart's pretty way of clearing a dyke in the discharge of his official duties that first attracted my respectful notice. The wall was that which shuts in the dominie's house from the illiterate world, darkening the small windows, over whose peeling mason-work rose-bushes straggle, and stunting the garden into a prison yard. Mr. Aitken was divesting his gaunt pump of its wintry suit of straw, stripping the lanky skeleton of its artificial flesh, and I had my hand against the mouth of its wooden spout, my lips at the gimlet-hole above, when Sneky's right leg showed over the hen-house. Two hands followed, clutching desperately for holes in the wall that did not happen to be there; the leg worked as if it were turning a grinding-stone, and next moment Hobart sat breathlessly on the dyke. From this to the wire hen-house, under its roof of "divits," down a waterspout, the descent was comparatively tame, and a slanting board allowed the daring bellman to slide thence to the ground. Mr. Aitken, who had never thought of wondering at Sneky's inviolable mode of effecting an entrance to his house, asked for Jewly, his visitor's helpmate, and having deliberated with him over the matter in hand, nodded him a frank good-day. Sneky was a polite Auld Licht, but he panted heavily, as with the remark, "Ay, weel, I'll ha'e to be ga'en," he turned to rescale the wall. I looked at the dominie, but he was again twisted round the pump, tearing the bonnet of stuffed sacks from its head. Diffidently I suggested to the bellman that he might find the gate easier. Sneky's face almost took some expression for a moment, and he let go his hold of the wire. "Is there a gate?" he said, chuckling over the resources of modern science, and went his way much relieved. He had always considered the climbing of the wall "a mighty oncanny way o' winnin' out an' in," though he was too considerate to say so.

Both his bell and his nickname were inherited by Hobart from a worthy father, and he was as proud of the one as he stormed at the mention of the other. When Auld Licht bairns (egged on, doubtless, by children of other denominations) felt life growing stale and flat, they could always give it a zest by piping "Sneky" down the bellman's lum and casting a nice damp clod of earth after the cry, ere escaping fearfully along the other

stone roofs. In the early days of the century, the elder Hobart's bell had roused the village on hazy mornings to drive back the threatened French invasion, and the bellman, in a fine martial frenzy, himself joined the volunteers. The Auld Lichts never got an opportunity of sweeping "Nap" and his hordes into the sea, but they practised diligently for the fray. Gradually it was noticed that Hobart contented himself with levelling his musket, telescope-like, at the target, then retiring proudly without firing. His comrades questioned him, but the bellman only regarded them slyly in reply. Then the officers took the matter up, and Hobart had to make a clean breast of it. "If you please, sir," he whispered them darkly, "the snecky winns' dra'." The humorous Auld Lichts christened him Snecky on the spot, and though his son left at the age of ten for the distant farm of Tullin, and did not return until the old man's death a score of years afterwards, his greeting on re-entering the village was a shrewd wife's surmise that he "would be little Snecky come to bury andl Snecky."

It was perhaps because his soul was in his bell that on great occasions, such as the loss of little Effie Lunan, Snecky became officially puffed up. Ordinary announcements he took as they came, crying sales of bankrupt stock, or the arrival of one dozen barrels of fine apples, or even the invasion of the village by a cheap Jock as (to him) mere bagatelle. I see the bent legs of the snuffy old man still, as they used to straighten to the sound of his beloved bell, the complacent wink with which he let the populace gather round him, the "gly" that informed him how his words were telling. In one hand he showingly displayed the paper on which his news was written (his insignia of office), but he scorned to "read" as much as the minister in the pulpit himself. The bell carefully tucked under his oxter, he spoke in a crescendo rasping voice that broke into gutturals at awkward moments. "There will be soald—this morn-ing (D.V.)—in the market place—by public roup—that faine stock of ladies' and gents'—boots and shoes—belonging to Mr. Alexander Phin—late boot and shoe makker—Gowrie's close—of this toon.—Sale to cum-mence—at eight o'clock—precisely." It would have broken his heart to think that, in the discharge of his official functions, he spoke one word of Scotch, but no one thought he did. Reluctantly he dropped the news into the mouths that gaped around, and then, carrying his bell by the tongue as carefully as if it were a flagon of milk, he hobbled off to repeat the announcement in the other wynds, with a score of admiring urchins at his heels. Snecky, though the fault was not his own, for he was continually agitating on the subject, wore no official uniform, but before crying matters of moment, he put on his tall lum hat. A swallow-tail was not for him, but he had fallen heir to a heavy great-coat, which he carried, perhaps a little ostentatiously, during the cloudless days of summer.

The tacit understanding between Government and its servants, that the latter should cover their heads with a veil when their employers go a kennin wrong, was not known to the philosophy of Hobart. His instructions he, on all occasions, carried out to the letter (except in the notorious case of the atheist Eassie, who wanted the letters D.V. to be omitted), but having once cried these,

his soul was his own. Snecky was a pernickitty, cantankerous body, and liked to unburden himself on the matter he had been crying. To listen to these criticisms from his official mouth was like taking counsel's opinion. Busy as a tax-collector he always was during the time of the hill-market, when the public common was given over to long tents that reeked of whisky, when the tails of the farm horses were gaudily decked with straw and ribbon, and impassable were the bleating roads. Cattle took their nearest way to the common, with a fine contempt for private property, and on one occasion, the exasperated laird of Platts sent round the bellman with the announcement that every cattle-driver caught trespassing on his grounds would be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law. There was consternation among Hobart's listeners. "Hoots, lads," Snecky said, as he folded up the paper, "dinna tak' on; it's juist a haver o' the grieve's."

An ugly rumour once went through the community to the effect that Snecky only awaited the offer of the kirk officiership of the new Free Church to accept it. People looked askance at him at the time, and I remember he did have a hang-dog appearance. But the temptation was greater than most of us understood. The new seceders had a bell that put every other musical instrument in the village to shame. It was the kirk officer's sacred privilege to toll it, and with Snecky it would have been a labour of love. The poor "stock" who got the post merely took it as a matter of money, and gave the minister "up his foot" for asking him to toll the prayer-meeting in on Wednesdays. Snecky would have rung it in and out every night in the week and tried variations between times. As it was he had to content himself with sneering audibly every time it rang; and wheresoever two or three Auld Lichts were gathered together in the square, with the bellman in their midst, one might be sure that Snecky, with a wistful eye in its direction, was laying down the law contemptuously concerning the Free Kirk bell.

Disappointment in a vale of tears is the occasional lot even of public men, as Lang Tammas used to remind the bellman over a capacious mull of snuff. Snecky would rake the fire gloomily and shake his head. Among his trials was the callousness of Doctor Lamont. Hobart was a body whose happiness lay from an early age in his medical man's hands. An ambition of his life was to be stricken with a fell disease, but the doctor never sympathized with his case, even to the extent of a trumpery cold. It was a great day for Snecky when he fell through Andra Gowrie's pig-stye and had to be carried home on a stretcher. But such occasions were rare, and even then he healed quickly. There never was a man with a more beautiful faith in pills, and in its way it was touching to see the bellman's trembling hands going out toward cough bottles. When he had the luck (for this was his only chance) to have relatives unwell in his house, he rubbed their rheumatic backs with a glee that would only have been excelled had the back been his own, enjoying the reflected glory; and the Auld Lichts who loved him, sent their medicinal drugs to him with their compliments. The bellman was a little injudicious in his mixtures, smacking his thin lips over whatever fell in his way, without asking

questions; and I have seen him draw a very long face over ointments wasted on flannel. He thought all medicines should be taken inwardly. Snecky looked forward to the drear day with a Christian fortitude that few Auld Lichts ever could manifest. His ideal death was after a lingering illness and much medicine taken from a spoon three times a day. There was poetry to him in the phrase "shake the bottle;" and complacently he awaited the time when he would be stricken down, and so turn the tables on the doctor. The impression was general among the Auld Lichts, though to do them justice they never mentioned it to him, that the reason why the bellman got no "treatment" was because he was so strong.

—————
PRISCIAN PRIM:
A TALE OF THE ISLE OF MAN.
BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.

—————
CHAPTER V.

"WELL, Cosnahan, what is it?" demanded Priscian Prim, taking the arm-chair in the coffee-room. "Sit down, man—sit down."

So the old fisherman laid his sou'-wester at his feet, and proceeded to balance his great brawny form upon the edge of a rickety chair; after which he placed his elbows upon his knees and his head in his hands, and then heaved a great sigh, as he eyed the other in an unpleasantly gloomy way.

"Good gracious! Cosnahan, are you ill?" cried Priscian Prim.

"No—no, sir. It isn't that at all. I'm sound enough in body; but in mind, I'm fearful, very. Maybe, Master Prim, yer've heard tell o' the *Eliza*?"

"What of her?"

"She went to pieces on the rocks at Ronaldsway."

"Suppose she did," said Priscian Prim with irritation.

But the old fisherman was feeling his way with the lead, and he went on cautiously.

"An' she was laden with coal, too."

"Look here, Cosnahan, if you've come here to—"

"An' she lost some of it, in course, Master Prim."

The lawyer thought he saw a gleam of light at last.

"And you wish me to prosecute the thief?" he asked.

"Not at all, sir. There was big junks o' coal lyin' in seams in the rock, an' it would ha' been hard to get at them with a pick even; an' I thought maybe you——"

"Thank you, Cosnahan; I understand now," said Priscian Prim in a firm, low voice. "Ask Costain to give you a glass of beer. Good-night. I'm much obliged to you." And with a brave face and a steady step he made his way up to his room, though his heart was heavy as lead.

So his palace of hopes had fallen with a crash. For the moment he bowed his head and felt that

he could never raise it again. His mine had proved to be a miserable chimera; his over-sanguine disposition had been the prey of a wretched delusion; the awakening was bitter indeed.

Nearly all night long he lay awake and brooded over his misfortunes, for which he was in no humour to lay any of the blame upon himself; but with the morning came the determination to try his hand at something else, to "pluck the flower safety from the nettle danger" somehow. He would not be beaten; the more he was knocked down, the more he was resolved to win.

Why not keep to his profession? you may ask. He had kept to his profession for ten years, and during that period he had had only one client. This was a grasping old fish-hawker, who wanted the lawyer to summons some unfortunate creature for fourpence. "Get out of this, you silly old idiot," said Priscian Prim, and expelled his solitary client with a book-jack. After this, I think you will admit that he did well in trying to turn his mind to some more profitable employment.

It was not from want of study or of attention to details that he failed in his profession. He had secured a snug office, and well stored it with legal handbooks, and placed in the window a gauzy blind, on which was neatly printed, "Mr. Priscian Prim, Advocate;" and then he sat down to watch behind this fascinating web for the fly that would not come. Yet the Manx are litigious enough; indeed they are so fond of the law that they support whole colonies of lawyers. But Priscian Prim had neither "push," nor ability, nor influence, only determination without a hand on the rudder; so perhaps it is no wonder that he failed to secure success. I fear that, without assistance, he may founder in deep water.

Upon his breakfast-table he found a letter in a sprawling feminine handwriting. It was pitiful reading, full of querulous complaints about bad food, bad treatment, bad everything; and the sentences were very difficult to follow, being often rambling and disconnected and incoherent. It implored him to take the writer away, and to put her somewhere else, though the reasons given were almost ludicrous. It was dated from a lunatic asylum, and written by his mother—that mother of whose existence the outside world seemed to be wholly ignorant. This, then, was the skeleton in Priscian Prim's cupboard; and he had been unusually successful in keeping it out of sight.

The poor woman had received such a shock at the sudden death of her husband that she had never recovered, and her existence had been a living death ever since. Thus when Priscian was little more than a boy, he found himself an orphan, dependent upon his exertions, except for a small income of about a hundred and fifty a year. Half of this sum he devoted to his mother's maintenance, and with the rest he managed to keep the wolf from the door, and this, too, in spite of his having frittered some of it away upon screw-propellers and his mine. But it had always been his earnest desire to obtain sufficient money to put his unfortunate mother into more luxurious quarters; and this was the chief thing that had lured him into these hazardous speculations.

He put down the letter with a weary sigh. He could not do anything for her at present, at any

rate. Cosnahan's words had shattered his last hope. What a foolish fellow he had been! He tried to soothe himself with the reflection that in suffering he had gained experience; but a maximum of powder with a minimum of jam is such an unpalatable bolus, that he pulled a very wry face over it.

He walked over to Ronaldsway, summoned his two men, and paid them off, prudently abstaining from giving them any reason for his conduct. If he had thrown away his money upon an absurd piece of folly, he saw no good cause for making himself a general laughing-stock.

"It's a ter'ble pity, I'm thinking, Master Prim," said Quilliam, as he covered up the mouth of the shaft with some thin, loose, rotten boards; "and we were just comin' to somethin' black, too. There's no knowin' but it's coal, after all."

Priscian Prim smiled grimly. He could quite sympathize with the man's feelings; but all that he said was—

"Are you sure those boards are safe?"

"Aw! safe enough, Master Prim. There'll be nobody coming here prancin' upon them. But don't you think, sir, that we might have another try? It's unlucky we've been so far—"

But Priscian Prim was already out of earshot. Nothing in the world, he said to himself, would tempt him to meddle with that mine again.

Of all sad words of tongue and pen,
The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'

This was the moral of his reflections as he walked back to the Abbey. The mine might have been successful, and he might have been rich enough to secure his poor mother's comfort, and to marry Mona. Ah! but there was another terrible barrier here; and as nothing except the destruction of another's happiness could sweep it away, he refused to linger over such a delicious dream. But the tempter came to him in the meagre form of Costain, standing, napkin in hand, at the door of the hotel.

"Miss Mylrea, sir," he said in a mysterious whisper.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Priscian Prim, with an angry stare.

"She's in the garden, sir."

"Indeed?"

"And Mr. Henry Quirk has gone away."

"Costain, you've been drinking," said Priscian Prim, and walked with great dignity into the house.

So far, his conduct was highly praiseworthy; but, alas! instead of going straight to his own room, he stopped at one of the staircase windows and peeped out. Yes, there she was, looking so pretty and charming in her mandarin hat and blue dress. She was sitting upon a rustic seat among the trees—a sweet contrast to the russet-tinted leaves, and the golden apples above her flaxen head. Though a book was upon her lap, she was not reading, her head being thrown slightly back, and her ruddy lips moving and her eyes dreamily fixed upon the old ruined refectory, as if she saw it peopled with monks, and heard their voices, and perhaps the bell going for vespers or matins. She knew what a frugal existence their's had been; that they "lived by their labour, with great mortification; wore neither shoes, furs,

nor linen; and ate no flesh except on journeys." Was she thinking of their working at some handicraft now? or was she thinking of her absent lover or of Priscian Prim? The very question was so pleasant that he put it to himself again and again without caring to give it a very definite answer. She looked so lovely out there, "wasting her sweetness on the desert air," as he poetically phrased it. Now, what could be the harm of going to speak to her—just to cheer her up a bit?

After having put the matter in this light he naturally came to the conclusion that she was pining for companionship, and he had better try to fill the void. As that miserable creature Costain might be skulking about in his noiseless way, he crept very stealthily down the stairs, hurried out, and entered the garden.

She was hidden among the trees at the far end, but he had not gone far in that direction when he was greeted by a little coal-scuttle bonnet among the raspberry bushes.

"I hope I see 'ou welly well, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim?"

His face clouded in a moment. Mona, then, was not alone.

"Yes, thank you, Brada," he said. "And how is your sister?"

"Pwitty well under de circumstances. Henwy Kirk has gone, 'on know."

He turned on his heel with a shiver, and went back to his room, for the child's words awakened him to the bitter fact that he still entertained more than a friendly feeling for Mona. He saw now that he must begin this hard struggle at once; that he must fight against himself ere it was too late. He determined to commence that very day.

The colonel invited him to dinner, and he readily accepted the invitation. Avoidance of Mona had proved an egregious failure; he would try the familiarity that is said to "breed contempt." You see, the man had plenty of resources as well as the courage of his convictions; yet somehow or other he always blundered. He sorted out his best songs, and sang them through with admirable steadiness, while the colonel indulged in a gentle snooze, and poor Mona, striving hard to shut her ears, played the accompaniment. Although getting really very fond of him, she was not blind to his faults, and felt it a pity that he should be always doing something for which he had no qualifications. With some kindly excuse, she shut up the piano, and Priscian Prim rolled up his music and went his way, quite contented with his performance.

After this, the two saw a good deal of each other, and accompanied by Brada, they had many long walks together.

Mona quite astonished him by the extent of her knowledge; perhaps, too, she imparted to him a little of her spirit, for he began to regard the things around with a much greater interest. But as for the attainment of what he professed to be his chief object in associating with her, that was certainly further off than ever; in fact, he was head over ears in love with her. He would not have confessed as much to himself, for then he would have been obliged to face the utter hopelessness of his position and the wrong that he was doing. Without money or prospects, he

was in love with a girl who was engaged to another; nothing could be much worse than this. But Priscian Prim, like the ostrich, buried his head in the sand, and would not see his danger. Mona was the only one who had thoroughly sympathized with him; it was so hard to run away and leave her—nay, more, was it not cowardly?

Strange that she should never mention Henry Quirk, he reflected one evening, as he wandered about the garden. Yet surely not so strange, after all. Was it likely that she should care to talk to him about her lover? Still he felt that he should like more definite information on this subject than he had obtained from Costain. If he could scarcely ask her, he could at least put a few careful questions to Brada. The opportunity arrived sooner than he expected.

It was a lovely autumn evening. The sun was sinking among the hills; overhead was spread a gorgeous curtain of gold and crimson, toning down to the palest pink and yellow on the eastern horizon; the apples seemed aglow in this flood of mellow light; and even the mossy old ruins had a beautiful flush that melted into their long, dark shadows.

It was not the whispering breeze that caused Priscian Prim to start suddenly and look up; he thought he heard somewhere in the air above him a pretty, lisping voice that he knew so well. Surely he was mistaken. But no. Perched up there on the very top of the ruined dormitory was a quaint little coal-scuttle bonnet. How it had got up was a mystery; the road down was easy enough. He was so terrified that he could only stand still and gaze vacantly at that eager little face that had no thought of its deadly peril, so busy was it in gathering maidenhair ferns.

He scarcely dared to move lest he should startle her; but at last he crept noiselessly up to the wall.

(To be continued.)



O TEMPORA! O MORES!

L

O WORLD that is grown wise with the wisdom that maketh nations,
And pointeth the page of the life of each, a record of hate and wrong;
That guideth and judgeth still all things by the laws of her first creations—
As my tame bird perched on my music book will warble his only song—
That planteth her foot on the cloudy heights, where perpetual war-frown wages,
Her mighty foot—a mightier she sees not and cannot own—
Cry to her ye in despair for truth, for a light in the night of ages:
She can but answer, "This I know, and that is the great unknown."

II.

O world that is grown vain, with the long self-recognition
Of the weak recluse from thy weary wiles, snug housed in his unknown lair,

Who hugs himself a god indeed, whose sense of supreme volition
Were that his lean soul could burst for the lore that is buried there:
A Bible, amended of latter days, and an all untinker'd Bunyan,
A Shakespeare too—and prophecy forsooth is more than spann'd—
With joy will he eat his leek, or—for the sake of rhyme—an onion,
And praise himself—and God—he can read, if he cannot understand.

III.

O world that is grown old, in a soulless, aimless fashion—
Grown old with the age of the simple child who finds that the days are long—
To the freak of a hand that pictur'd Love as a dimpled baby passion,
And Time as an aged limping man who scowls on the harvest throng;
Willing to sadden with bygone shade the promise of bright to-morrow,
And rather to stay by a broken staff than soar upon untried wings;
Wearily willing to sink at last, with hardly a sigh of sorrow,
Where the ghostly hand of tottering creeds has pointed the end of things.

IV.

O dotard world that prates of ends, and knows not the beginning;
And dreams that the chords of slumbering spheres find pulse in it alone—
May not the stars, whose secrets thou hast lost the hope of winning,
Thy orb obscure have waiting watch'd through time to thee unknown;
Strange missives aim'd, and signals flash'd—to thee a thing benighted—
Seeking a sign where alas! was none save that of dead aons' roll:
And may not one with a weary hope its vigil fire keep lighted—
A waiting world—to witness yet the dawn of responsive soul?

J. Roy Nicolson.



"ON THE WINGS OF SONG."

BY E. G. FULLER.

PART L

"TEN! eleven! twelve!" counted Tom wearily; as the old City churches rang out the midnight hour. "Oh, dear! will to-morrow ever come?"

To-morrow was to be, in Tom's eyes, the most important day of his life; not that that was saying much—a cripple's life, passed principally on the basement floor of a City lodging-house, is apt to be a trifle monotonous. And here it may be remarked that had you ever asked of Tom how he came to be thus hopelessly crippled, he would have answered: "How I came so?" Well! mostly 'cos of father's visions;" and had you requested

further enlightenment, he would with solemn alacrity have explained himself, regardless of grammar and with hazy ideas as to tenses.

" You see; mother she died when I was just a little 'un, and fayther he felt lonesome, natural like, and he goes and sits all evening at the 'public.' Well, he comes in 'most about one o'clock, and he hears me a-whining and a-crying 'cos I was hungry; so father comes, and lifts me up, and then he has a vision, and he sees two babies, so he opes his arms to catch t'other and drops me. Father, he was real sorry, they said, when he found it out and cried offul."

Which was true enough, but maudlin tears will not cure hip disease, and Albert Wood did not profit by this terrible lesson, or mend his ways. Still a man cannot drink with impunity for ever, and "visions" are not always vouchsafed even to inebriated men. Crossing a road late one night, Mr. Wood not only did not see two hansom and two horses, he failed even to see one, and consequently died in "hospital" some five days after; neither horse nor driver having been prepared for Mr. Wood's total collapse in the middle of the road.

Tom, then nearly ten years old, shed most bitter tears, not so much at his father's death but at the fact that with it his chief and sole pleasure must of necessity be withdrawn. Albert Wood was a fair musician; gifted with a voice that to the last procured him a small salary at an East-end music hall. When sober he would sing and play on the old cracked piano, then he would lift Tom on his knees and teach him his notes and scales, at which the boy laboured diligently for months sometimes before something fresh was taught him.

He would spend hours happily employed in picking out simple chords, whilst Millie, the landlady's little girl, would listen in awed amazement; sometimes she would uplift her clear, shrill, young voice in humble imitation of Albert Wood; but Tom was a severe critic, and discouraged all such efforts!

When Mr. Wood died the other lodgers stolidly wondered "what would become of the boy?" till Mrs. Clemments, the landlady, settled the question in her usual energetic style.

" I'll take him; I don't mind the lad, he's quiet eno', and he won't cost much, all said and done."

So to Millie and Tom's mutual delight the boy moved from the fourth floor to the basement, and there lived henceforth and pined for his dear "pianner." Tom's only method of "taking the air" was to be planted on the doorstep of an afternoon, and remain there till such time as Mrs. Clemments saw fit to carry him in again; crutches being an unknown luxury to the boy. Thus airing himself, he had struck up an acquaintance with a big lad, some fourteen years of age; and into Dick's sympathizing ears Tom confided his yearnings music-wards. And Dick had promised to carry Tom the very next day to a big place, where he would "hear an organ" (not a street one) "as made a deal of sound." No wonder Tom laid awake and counted the hours!

Next day, true to his promise, Dick arrived about four o'clock, and having hoisted Tom on to his shoulder, they set out, a succession of jumps and jolts against various passers-by distinguishing their progress. Still, small pains vanish under the shadow of a great joy; so Tom set his teeth,

and bore in silence, till at last the great dome of St. Paul's loomed above them.

" My! Dick! What a big place," he said in an awestruck whisper. " Who lives there? "

" Nobody!" returned Dick, contemptuously. " It's a church, you young fool! leastways it ain't a church, nayther; it's a cat—something —"

" Oh!"—further words failed Tom at such a moment.

On went Dick with his burden, up the broad steps into the great echoing nave; and then the first tremulous whispers of the organ fell on the wrapt little listener's ears; and all the pain and weariness of his young life seemed to fade away as softly there floated through the dim aisles, that most beautiful of melodies, "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges."

" Dick, wasn't it real lovely?" exclaimed Tom, as they came out into the bustling noisy streets again. But Dick was dubious.

" I don't know as I thought much on't; there weren't no tunes to speak of. Still, it did make a deal of noise."

" Will you ever take me again?" was the next earnest query; and Dick, looking into the little, pinched, wistful face, felt a sudden impulse to generosity.

" I don't mind if I do," answered the man of business loftily; " leastways when I've time." And the look Tom gave him said more than the few gasping words of thanks.

That night, as Tom and Millie sat together in the dark—Mrs. Clemments having "stept round to see a friend"—the boy hummed the air he had heard that afternoon until Millie too caught it up; and fresh and clear rang the beautiful melody through the dingy basement room.

Next day Dick arrived in a state of great excitement and importance.

" You're in luck's way, young chap," he said, swinging his legs, as he balanced himself on Mrs. Clemments' deal table. " What do you say to a drivin' in your carriage to hear the organ evry day? "

Open-mouthed amazement on the part of his listeners. Dick smiled benignantly.

" Well!" he said slowly, " it's this way. Surly Jim (he's a friend of mine, what has a costermonger's cart and a donkey), he says he'll drive you there every day; and I can't say"—impressively—"as I saw hany objections."

Objections! hardly! Tom was nearly crazy with delight; and even Mrs. Clemments smiled as Surly Jim, a battered felt hat well cocked over one eye, a short black pipe in his mouth, drew up before her door that afternoon. Away went cart and donkey with Tom carefully wedged in between two baskets of 'taters and carrots, and his head, for softness, reclining on a heaped-up pile of cabbages.

Sometimes, as the warm days lengthened out, Millie would be allowed to go too; then the children would sit hand in hand, listening to the story of the organ. Listening enthralled, as it spoke to them of hope and happiness, and infinite possibilities which they were as yet too young and untrained to comprehend. But by little and little the seed grows; and the unexpected comes at times into every life.



"Millie!" shrieked Tom, one November afternoon, in great excitement; "look here!"

And Millie, nothing loth, flew to his side and pressed her curly head against his, as they stared eagerly up through the window.

"I do believe it's a pianner," whispered Tom in an awestruck but delighted whisper.

"It's the new lodger, I'll be bound; he's no end of a swell"—Millie spoke according to her lights—"and he axed mother if she'd mind a pianner. I forgot to tell you; but I'll go and listen, presently; p'raps he'll play a bit."

After supper that evening, when Mrs. Clements as usual "stept out," Millie stole upstairs and presently returned, breathless and delighted.

"Tom! he's playing beautiful! I've been listening outside ever so long."

"And why didn't you stay?" he cried enviously, whilst the hot tears welled up into his eyes; the third floor was an unattainable height to the cripple.

"Because I wouldn't listen without you," answered Millie stoutly; "so I'm going to carry you up."

Millie!

The children looked at one another, breathless!

"Can you ever? I'm bigger nor you?"

"Never mind! you hold on tight and I'll do it."

So with infinite difficulty, and frequent cannonades from the wall to the banisters and back again, Millie at length deposited her burden outside the new lodger's door.

Signor Altro, opening the door some hour or so later, nearly fell headlong over the two little crouching figures.

"What do you here?" he exclaimed in amazement, looking from the crippled form, propped against the doorway, to the girl, sturdy, erect and defiant.

"We came to listen," she said.

Signor Altro's face softened. "How did he come up?" he asked, pointing to Tom.

"I carried him. I wouldn't listen nohow, without Tom; but we both love music so, Tom and I."

It was Signor Altro who gently carried the boy downstairs that night.

Carlo Altro was a born musician; but, through his own fault, an unsuccessful one. Gifted with genius, with every facility and help to study, he had always lacked perseverance and concentration, two qualities most essential to success. Just because all was so easy to him, he never worked. And now, at nearly sixty years of age, discontented with his life, grumbling often at the very Art he loved so well, alone and friendless in a foreign country, more than a little bit of a misanthrope, he had, from a mere whim, not from poverty, taken lodgings in Allen Street. "At least I can go my own way," he argued. "Wherever I am, no one cares for me." Then, this very first night, as if to disprove his words, two young lives glided into his; and the man, who had never worked for himself, now toiled and studied for the sake of two little children. Daily he would carry Tom upstairs, and teach him and instruct him in harmony; till Millie, her day's work as "slavey" to the house done, would knock at the door; and then, Altro, going to the piano, would draw out her voice, till the room re-echoed with the clear, fresh notes. And so the years

passed away. After a lengthy interview with Mrs. Clements (highly satisfactory, to judge from her pleased face), Altro had assumed almost complete control over the children, who, under his tuition, learnt many things apart from their music, though that of course came always first and foremost. Sometimes Altro would take them to a "Monday Pop" at St. James's Hall; then Gian would meet them there, and drive home with them, discussing the programme, and arguing eagerly with Tom over the respective merits of Joachim or Néruda, Janotta or Zimmermann, Piatti or Hausmann. Gian Lucca was the son of an old friend of Altro's; and was now, since his father's death, training for the "profession," being possessed of a remarkably fine tenor voice.

Altro had run against him one day, and had brought him to Allen Street, and now a fast friendship had sprung up between the quaintly assorted quartet. Gian was often able to help Millie with hints and advice; sometimes they sang together, and their voices blended well—the clear soprano and the rich, full tenor. Then Tom would climb on to the high music-stool and play softly and dreamily till the very walls seemed to draw more closely to listen.

Yet he was often dissatisfied.

In his feeble frame lay genius, dormant no longer, but, alas! often speechless.

Physically, he was unable to play much of the music he loved so passionately and felt the mental power to interpret.

"I can never do anything; my life must be a wasted one," he would cry despairingly.

"As a mere pianist, perhaps so," Altro would answer kindly; "but you have the power, Tom, to create—for others; weak fingers and a bent back are no obstacles there."

But Tom refused to be comforted.

"It is so hard," he moaned, "to feel it, to understand it all, yet to be so powerless."

But Altro answered sternly (for practice and precept are widely different): "Is music, then, to offer no hardships? Are you the first who has suffered? Look at Beethoven and Handel! Did Chopin moan when he failed to play even his own music? No! create, weave for others, Tom; make music of your life, instead of selfishly moaning over and dwelling on your own petty troubles."

And the boy never forgot those words.

PART II.

A cozy, well-lighted room; an elderly lady placidly knitting in an arm-chair; a girl in a soft grey dress, just relieved with touches of black, standing over the tea-urn; such was the picture which Gian and Tom mentally pictured to themselves as they hastened homewards one dull November evening, some four years or so after the events recorded in the last chapter.

Life was a very different thing to Tom now. He had been under surgical treatment for nearly two years, and though still lame, could now get about quite easily with the help of a crutch. And that was not the only change which the last four eventful years had wrought; though retrospect must always be brief. Mrs. Clements had died

nearly three years before, and then Altro had moved with "his children" to a quiet street in Bloomsbury, and there a busy, happy year had been passed. Tom and Millie both entered as students at the Academy of Music, and, with Altro's help and encouraging sympathy, made wonderful progress. He was almost more keenly interested in their studies than they themselves were; and his delight when Tom laid before him the score of his first composition was almost pathetic. His somewhat sudden death, about a year before, had been a terrible grief and shock to both, though his death made no difference in their prospects, the old man having left his money (about £400 a year) equally divided between "his two children," so that to themselves they seemed millionaires. Then, as they were discussing the grave problem—"What shall we do now?" "Where shall we go?"—Gian came forward and proposed a joint *ménage* in Bloomsbury. Might he and his aunt—his mother's sister—join them in housekeeping? Signora Vellani would be delighted. It was soon settled, and an excellent arrangement it proved to be. Millie and the Signora became fast friends, and vied with each other in spoiling "their two boys."

And now, this 22nd of November was a red-letter day to two at least of the little community. For weeks beforehand, with bated breath, struggling between tears and laughter, the Signora had told all her friends the great news—

"At the Students' Concert on November 22nd, a concerto for two pianos—Tom's own composition—is to be played, and Millie is to sing twice. Decidedly, that speaks well for both—but I always knew they had genius," finished the old lady with a deprecating air of proprietorship.

For the young people themselves it was a proud though anxious moment.

Millie clasped her hands and turned quite white as the opening bars of Tom's concerto were played; and she looked anxiously across at Gian to see whether that severe critic looked approval or the reverse. But presently she turned a look of such triumphant and beaming congratulation on Tom as he sat white and trembling with excitement, that all the cordial words and hand-shakes he received from his friends afterwards seemed as nothing.

Then Millie's turn came; and Gian and Tom listened, breathless, as her voice rang out true, fresh, and clear from the first high note to the last tender fall, when a burst of applause followed, and Millie bowed and smiled; but only looked for approval from the two who made her world.

"There they are!" cried Millie, as the sound of a crutch was heard in the passage; and then as the door opened she ran forward to meet Tom with outstretched hands and eager words of congratulation.

"It was all just splendid," she cried enthusiastically; everyone was saying so. I felt so proud of my brother."

Why, even in that first flash of happiness should Tom have felt for a moment vaguely vexed at her last words?

"I felt proud of you too, dear," he said, looking at her fondly. "I have never heard you sing as you did to-night. I think"—quaintly—"the angels must have drawn near to listen."

Millie laughed and shook her head reprovingly and Gian's entry at that moment made a diversion.

Millie drew a low stool close to the Signora and sat leaning against the old lady's knee, whilst the "boys" drew their chairs to the fire and lit their pipes preparatory to a real good gossip, as the girl said laughingly. And gossip they did, talking over the events of the evening almost into the small hours.

"Attention!" cried Gian at last, as he knocked the ashes out of his "very last pipe." "I want your congratulations now; Dame Fortune has remembered me too, and I have got promotion since this morning. Not to keep you in suspense too long (I quite tremble as I look at Aunt Lucia's face), I will come to the point at once. I am offered an engagement—a good one—with the Carl Rosa Company."

"And you have accepted?"

"Of course."

How delighted they all were! Tom shook Gian's hand till his arm ached; the Signora produced her handkerchief; and Millie quietly put out her hand, and said, "I am so glad for you, Gian," and again the girl's voice and look jarred on Tom. He wondered at himself as he leant back in his chair, and watched them, smoking meditatively.

Hitherto he had never questioned his life or surroundings; Millie was Millie—that was enough. Certainly he had never contemplated life without her; why should he? And if, these last few months, every endeavour and aspiration had been silently offered to her, even then he had never analyzed his feelings, never realized the strong, silent tide that was sweeping him swiftly onwards—for weal or woe. Already the ripples were nearing the shore, yet he knew it not—not then. It all came to him as he lay awake that night. He knew now that he had loved Millie for months, years; nay, was there ever a time when he had not loved her? And he thought—was he wrong—that she liked him. And yet! One question haunted him. Had he any right to ask her to bind herself for life to a cripple? And Tom's face flushed, and he clenched his hands. "Why not?" he cried aloud; "I love her so dearly. I will work for her, care for her, so that she shall never feel me a burden. I am strong to love and to work." And just then came a sudden, sharp pain at his heart, and even Millie was forgotten in the agony of the moment. "I have been working too hard," he said, as the paroxysm subsided; "I must rest now, for her sake."

And sleep came to him.

He was playing softly, dreamily, that exquisite little "*Träumerei*" of Schumann's, when Millie came into the room, and stood beside him.

"You have never played like that before!" she said half wonderingly.

"I was playing to you," he said gently.

The ripples had touched the shore.

There was a moment's silence.

"I have something to say to you," said the girl softly.

"And I to you, dear; but I can wait," answered Tom, unselfish as always in aught that concerned her. "What is it?"

Millie drew a stool to his side, and leant her

head on his arm; and Tom felt suddenly how good and blessed a thing life was. How bright the room looked! A stray sunbeam was peeping in, and shyly kissing a bunch of Christmas roses at Tom's elbow, and the canary was singing merrily.

"What is it, dear?" he repeated softly; while to himself he said, "my wife."

Then—"Gian has asked me to be his wife, and oh! Tom, dear, I think I am the happiest, proudest girl in the world."

The sunbeam had stolen away; the bird was silent; but the two sat on; one with dry, tearless eyes, trying to realize the words he had just heard; the other, smiling and dreaming.

"I hope you will both be *very* happy," said Tom at last gently.

"It must make no difference between us, you know dear," she said; "we three, at any rate, must always live together."

Tom smiled wearily:

"In my opinion newly married people are best left to themselves—at first, at any rate."

"But we are different, Tom; home will never be quite home without you, dear; you *must* not leave us;" and then Gian called, and the girl ran away, leaving Tom—alone.

The great "might have been" of his life had just passed, and he knew well that "might have been" could never for him change to "may be," or "shall be."

* * * * *

It was a quiet wedding enough that took place in an old City church one frosty January morning. Tom gave Millie away (she had asked him to do so), but there were no outsiders present. The Signora was the girl's sole bridesmaid and female attendant, and to do her justice, shed tears enough to be quite *en règle*! Tom wished he might follow her example. Yet he smiled and laughed, *ss*, armed with rice and an old satin slipper of Millie's, he bade them adieu.

"Be sure you have the score of your 'Sonata' ready for our return," cried the young wife merrily, as they drove off; and Tom nodded a cheerful assent.

A last wave of the hand, a final energetic shower of rice, then the cab turned the corner, and Tom wearily dragged himself into the sitting-room, where the Signora found him some time later, white and panting.

"You have had one of your attacks; and I daresay you've never taken your 'drops,'" she said reproachfully; and he penitently owned he had not.

The old lady laid a cool, white hand on his arm, and then, with a sudden impulse, bent down and kissed his forehead.

"Poor lad!" she said softly.

With a woman's quickness and intuitive sympathy, she had guessed his trouble.

* * * * *

Armed with a large bouquet of Neapolitan violets, Tom stood on the doorstep ready to welcome Millie and Gian some three weeks later. The cab drew up; Gian carefully handed out his wife, and in another minute Tom had got Millie's hand closely pressed in his, whilst Millie's voice was murmuring soft words of greeting and welcome.

After the first interchange of news, and after Tom had shown his nearly completed score to his

delighted friends, Millie put her hands on his shoulders and inspected him critically.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sir," she said with a little tremor in her voice, as she looked at him fondly. "Just because I've not been here to take care of you, you've not chosen to take the most ordinary care of yourself. You look *so* ill, dear, I suppose you have had some of those dreadful attacks?"

"Just one or two"—"One or two in three weeks," murmured Millie—"but I am better now. I've worked too hard, I think."

"I don't think—I know you have;" and Millie shook her head emphatically. "You will just have to rest now, Tom."

"Yes," he assented quietly; then he looked up and smiled. "Don't look so dreadfully solemn, please Millie; you make me feel quite guilty."

"Tom," she answered, half unheeding, "we will go up to St. Paul's this afternoon, and hear the organ. I want—I should like—to go with you, dear, on this day," she added in a lower tone.

"And I will come and meet you both," cried Gian.

So they went; and in the same place where, years ago, the two children had sat, Tom and Millie knelt once more that February afternoon.

The organ swelled and re-echoed through the cathedral, and the two listeners sat entranced, forgetting aught else.

Presently the organist began the opening bars of "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges," and at that moment Tom's hand stole softly into Millie's.

"How cold you are," she whispered anxiously as she placed her other hand tenderly on his. "We must stay here much longer."

The shadows deepened and lengthened as the great organ rolled on.

Piercing higher than aught but love and prayer can reach until

Only the silence seemed to listen still.

* * * * *

"Tom," said Millie softly, "we must go now."

But Tom heard not; even Millie's voice failed to arouse him.

In the spot he loved most on earth, his hand in hers, Tom had quietly and peacefully passed away.

"Auf Flügeln des Gesanges."

ADELAÏDA.

I.

O H, passionate song! and is thy singer dead,
And dead the love he sang?
When in the dawn, and through the sunset red
His "Adelaïda" through the woodlands rang:
And the sweet nightingale, with flute-like tone,
Nor less the wild sea-waves took up thy name,
To make night musical; for thou wert one
With Nature—to thy lover; and there came
With the soft winds, the twilight dim,
Fair thoughts of thee to him.
Beloved! Adelaïda! of thee now
Strange lips may sing; for thou
And he that of thy name such music made
To dust are laid.

II.

Oh, Adelaida ! is thine image gone
 From heaven and earth ?—thy form
 That caught the wind, and in the moonlight
 shone,
 And crowned the Alpine snows, and charmed the
 storm ?
 Doth nought of thee but thy sweet name remain,
 Oh, Adelaida, spirit of his song !
 Strange hearts beat wildly to the witching
 strain ;
 Its passion grows while speed the years along :
 Lover ! still blooms the purple flower that burst
 From thy heart's ashes first ;
 Still on its leaves, oh love ! thy name shines
 clear,
 For his sake still held dear ;
 And in the Eden of true hearts re-met,
 Ye feel it yet.

PAULINE W. R.

SEPTEMBER.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

Come out, 'tis now September,
 The hunter's moon's begun ;
 And through the wheat and stubble,
 Is heard the frequent gun.

VES, in the grey morning light, ere sleepy little flowers have opened their eyes to the sun, perhaps even before the lark—that proverbially early riser—has taken his morning flight, the sharp ping of the breechloader is heard across the fields of stubble and turnips. The unfortunate coveys of partridges, which have been marked down for a week past, are running the gauntlet among the early sportsmen. Great is the consternation among the poor birds, who, all unconscious of what is afoot, at first fall an easy prey. Family ties are broken, old and young, tough and tender, fall indiscriminately; but terrified at last by the incessant banging, they grow wild and suspicious, and the sport becomes less of a massacre and more of a chase. A patriarchal partridge—we have had only too painful experience that such are sometimes shot—might doubtless have many a sanguinary story to tell of hair-breadth escapes and the slaughter of near relatives. If one could only take a bird's-eye view of the subject—forget the exhilarating nature of the sport, lose sight for the moment of the savoury meat, such as our soul loveth—we must feel something like sorrow as we look at the contents of "the bag."

Of course, the time may come when the desire of many in the land will be fulfilled; when there will be no more violent muscular amusements, when pheasants and partridges will be as scarce as hoopoes, when foxes like wolves will be no more seen, and hunting and shooting become as obsolete as the tournaments of the Middle Ages. About the same time, the youth of England will dress in velvet knickerbocker suits, wear their hair long, and their principal amusements consist of tea-meetings and lectures on the ologies. Thank goodness ! there is much that is manly left yet. We must confess that we have no sympathy whatever for those, who, miscalling themselves

sportsmen, sit behind a blind or hedge and have the game driven over their heads to be shot at; nor for those who indulge in that modern invention, the *battue*, which appears to be a contrivance for killing the largest amount of game in the shortest possible time, with the least amount of trouble.

It is the very essence of all sport that it should consist of a chase, in which there is an element of chance, and the excitement of enterprise. The peculiar charm of a *battue* appears to lie in the absence of all these, and the arrangements for wholesale slaughter, for which elaborate and expensive preparations have been made for months past. The mere fact of slaughtering so many head of game without moving from the spot, is simply cold-blooded butchery, without one redeeming feature to recommend it, and it is a hideous libel on the word sport to dignify it by that name.

But let us try and forget a subject which only raises our bile, and enjoy this lovely September morning in the country. The atmosphere at no period of the year is as clear as now, so much so that objects which are really a long way off, appear quite near. That warm shimmering haze which veiled the horizon all the summer has disappeared, and the colouring of the landscape is carried on far into the perspective, until it fades away into the deep purple which bounds the view.

We are staying in our native county of Downshire, chasing health over its emerald downs that we love so well. We know every inch of the neighbourhood, the breezy downs, its white roads, its shady lanes, yellow with primroses in spring and overhung with honeysuckles in summer.

As we stand here in the rectory garden, the blackbirds are popping in and out from under the bushes, and the sparrows are hopping about on the lawn, trying to make believe they are both busy and useful. As we look down the road towards the village, the carrier's cart with its whistling red-faced driver crosses the little bridge. He comes by here every morning on his way to Wallsbury. What childish joys and recollections are conjured up by the sight of that carrier's cart which we remember since we could first toddle. The driver too, with weather-beaten, crimson face, although the son of the carrier of our childish memory, appears even in our maturer years so exactly like him, that we fancy time must have stood still with him and he is yet the same man.

Everything about this village recalls some memory of our childish days. We love its thatched roofs, dotted with patches of yellow-green moss, with here and there a blue slate or red-tile roof to give colour. We love the old stone Tudor cottages, with their roomy porches of grey stone, so warm and impervious to all weathers, which mellow them to the exact tone and appearance of the outside of a ripe Stilton cheese, and cover them with lichens in orange patches and grey shadings to the chimney-tops, where the swallows sit and twitter and the starlings fantastically twist their glistening necks.

We like the cottage gardens and the charming want of arrangement of the mixed borders with their gillyflowers, sweet-williams, carnations, roses, and sweet-smelling lavender bushes. We love the village church, solid and imperturbable in its simplicity, with its square Norman tower and the half-effaced sundial over the porch, and the two

large yews in the churchyard, where the "rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep," which are probably as old as the tower, and daily cast their flickering shadows on the latticed panes of the chancel window.

We love the solitudes of the country roads, where one occasionally meets the tramp on his eleemosynary progress, and heavy waggons, drawn by slow and ponderous horses, laden with corn or flour; sometimes farmers on their way to market, or the doctor on his rounds.

And there are the high downs with their moving shadows, and sheep dotted about in picturesque groups. There are people to whom sheep suggest nothing but mutton, and lambs but mint sauce; but here the sheep place themselves about the landscape as though they themselves had an eye to the picturesque, and were anxious to group themselves effectively.

We like to go nutting with the children in Groveley Woods or the Warren Spinney, where the twisted beech roots are covered with velvety green moss, where the great hart-tongue ferns loll about, and where shouts proclaim that a cluster of five or six has been secured.

What delightful reminiscences of early years do not these nutting excursions recall? A nutting expedition on a September day is a thing to enjoy and remember for years. The preparation and excitement attendant thereon absorbs all our thoughts for days beforehand. How anxiously the old weather-glass is tapped and the signs of the skies are studied! The packing of the cold meats, pastry, bottled ale, home-made wines and crockery is a scene of bustling animation. Then comes the ride to the woods, in all sorts of odd-looking vehicles pressed into service for the occasion, and the selection of some patriarchal oak under which to unpack our treasures, and spread the cloth. Then the nutters, each carrying a bag and armed with a hooked stick, plunge into the thick of the wood and merry shouts and laughter resound from its shady depths. By degrees these sounds grow faint in the distance, the nutters are scattered far and wide and lost in the green wood, and all you hear is the song of the thrush or the blackbird, the rustle of the leaves in the oak above, and the murmuring of the little brook that all unseen is for ever singing its quiet tune as it winds its way by the edge of the wood.

At length, when the hour for dinner arrives, a battered old horn is brought from the waggon, upon which a fearsome blast is blown, and with much talking and laughter the company are soon assembled. Never before or since were there such ham and beef, and apple pies and jam tarts, custards, sandwiches, bottled ale and gooseberry wine, and summary justice is done to all. The green gooseberry wine, which has been cooling in the brook, is uncorked, and toasts are drunk, and a gayer or happier party never was seen in the "merrie green wood."

At length, the feast being over, the elders recline under the shadow of the great oak, smoke their pipes, and chat over the days when they were young, and finish the green gooseberry; while the younger ones pair off, and appear to lose themselves in the depths of the woods. But the happiest of September days must come to an end, and so that fearful horn is blown once more, and the young folk make for the trysting-tree. The

carts are packed, the horses are put to, and everything is ready to start on our homeward journey, when it is discovered that two couples are missing. The battered horn is again brought forth and blown most vigorously, sending forth a more weird and discordant blast than before, the echoes giving back the sound in still more gruesome notes. The truants appear at last, and various jokes are hurled at them and their empty nut-bags.

Then comes the drive home through the soft moonlight, where a good supper awaits the whole party, and the pleasures of the day are brought to a close round the hospitable board.

Although the downs, with their wavering shadows, are the glory of Downshire, we have hereabout some mighty woods that would have delighted the soul of the contemplative Jacques, and where even he would have found solitude sufficient to satisfy his humour. Here the grim oaks stretch their giant arms defiantly and tie themselves into robust knots; here the bright-rinded beech has belts of moss and spots of feathery emerald; here the strong and vigorous ash throws out its huge antlers; and here also is the meek dog-rose, and the scrubby elder.

At this season in the depths of the woods, where the green gloom has so long prevailed, the cheerful sunshine now begins to diffuse its beams. This is attributable, not to the fall of the leaf, which has yet scarcely begun, but to the general flagging of the foliage, caused by a weaker circulation of the sap, and also in a degree to the change which is everywhere perceptible in the colour—the deep green having given place to red, brown and yellow, which absorb less light and reflect more.

Many a summer flower that has long vanished from the hedgerows and wayside may yet be found in the woodland glen. The scorching sun of July and August has failed to reach them, and here they are growing, rather pale perhaps, but lovely, cheating one into the belief that summer yet reigns. Here is the blue-bell, the oxlip, the arum, and under the rank grass that shades the roots of the hazel many a pale bloom of the primrose may yet be found, its petals almost white from its long sojourn in the shade.

This month is also the season for blackberries; the juicy fruit may be gathered on every hedge-row at the price of a few scratches. In some districts where they abound great quantities are picked and sent to market, and you will see vast heaps of them for sale in all the markets during September. Tons are sold in the manufacturing towns of the North, and tons more are eaten in the rural districts in puddings and as jam.

Mushrooms form another spontaneous and gratuitous harvest which may be gathered in September. On certain soils these are to be found in prodigious quantities, and at this season a regular business is made of collecting them in the early morning with the dew on them, before that delicate aroma which they have only during their first hours of existence be departed.

In the county of Kent, too, another harvest is being actively gathered during this month. Hop-picking is a spectacle with which most people are familiar, and upon which we need not dwell. It affords a healthy outing to many a dweller in city courts who otherwise would never get a smell of the country.

The twenty-ninth of this month is the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, popularly known as Michaelmas-day. Many have striven to solve the question why goose and apple-sauce should be substituted on this day for the time-honoured roast beef, which is supposed to have such great influence in forming the national character. It has been asked why is it that

— by custom (right divine)
Geese are ordained to bleed at Michael's shrine?

The story goes that Queen Elizabeth, when she made that famous ride to Tilbury Fort in 1588, dined with Sir Neville Umfreville, and having done her share towards demolishing "a brace of fine geese," she called for a pint of burgundy, and gave as a toast "Destruction to the Spanish Armada." At this moment a messenger was announced who brought the news that the Invincible Armada had been destroyed by a storm; whereupon the Queen, who always had an eye to popularity, called for another bumper and gave orders that a goose should grace the royal table on each anniversary of the twenty-ninth of September; and the records say that "the court made it a custom and the people the same ever since."

Unfortunately for the records, we lately unearthed the following lines by the poet Gascoigne, written in 1575, which prove that Michaelmas and geese were connected before Queen Elizabeth rode to Tilbury Fort:—

At Christmasse a capon, at Michaelmasse a goose,
And somewhat else at New Year's tide,
For feare their lease fie lese;
And when the tenuantes come to pay their quarter's
rent,
They bring some fowl at Midsummer, a dish of fish in
Lent.

However it may be, may the old saying be verified among all our readers, that whoever eats goose on this festival will never want money all the year round.



LECTURE ON FREE WOMAN.

BY R. HENRY.

LECTURE on Free Woman to be delivered by me to crowded audiences, first of all in London, and subsequently in every town and village throughout the United Kingdom. I have not quite completed it, but I will just go through what I have written to try the effect. I will imagine that a vast assemblage is before me; that the eyes of England are upon me. Amongst my audience are a few of those advanced thinkers of the day who do not quail when woman steps into the arena. Men who are unsexed by the force of their intellects, who might be women for the profoundness of their views, the breadth of their reasoning, the correctness of their judgment. But let me lose myself in the grandeur of my subject. Friends, sisters, countrywomen, I come before you to plead a great cause—the cause of woman—free! What hitherto have women been? Toys, playthings. Dolls to be attired in the newest fashions and then sneered at for their

devotion to dress. Puppets to be paraded at balls and fêtes for the amusement of their tyrants. Balls—the very thought sickens me. I stand aside and watch the debasing game. I see women no longer young and comely, whose heads should be crowned with wisdom, arraying themselves for the fight—to win what? Not learning, not the precious words of some world-renowned sage, but the smiles of men who despise them for their folly. I see young and lovely girls who might make themselves the instruments to chastise man's presumption, I see them receiving flattery and honied words as if these were the highest good the world contained. It is to these foolish ones I preach, that I may teach them to value at their true worth the insipidity, the falsehood, the emptiness of man, and to revel in the glorious paths which have at last been opened to us. Yes, my sisters, man, the contemptible, the mean, the small-minded, shall no longer be permitted to keep to himself those prizes which were his—only because woman was not allowed to compete for them. Now we will wrench them from his grasp. The worm has turned, the down-trodden sex has asserted its superiority. Free woman! How grand the words! Free from the dictates of fashion! Free from the ignoble fetters which the world would throw around us; and best of all, free from woman's natural enemy, man! I know what I shall have to contend against promulgating these doctrines. I know people will sneer and hint at sour grapes, but it's an awful story. Why, I could tell them that Jack Huntly—oh, I can't say that in my lecture—but it's quite true, Jack would give his little finger if I'd marry him. I marry! What to me are the blandishments of the weaker sex. What to me if that little cat Lucy Grahame says I'm in love with him and that he doesn't care for me. It's not true, and she knows it. Why, last night at the conversazione he wouldn't leave me although I had ears only for the powerful intellects that were discussing the vexed questions of the day. I had eyes only for those noble women who will one day rule the world. Certainly Lucy was looking her very worst, but that wasn't the reason Jack didn't notice her. Let me see, where was I? There will come a time—there's a visitor, how tiresome! Now I shall have to leave this exalted, this engrossing theme and descend to the petty trivialities of life. If it's a woman I shall be forced to discuss the wickedness of servants, the ailments of children—subjects which have no meaning for me. If it's a man I shall be dosed with inane compliments which are supposed to be suited to our intellects. It's neither—it's only Jack. I suppose I shall have to refuse him for the seventh time. You must sit down and keep quiet, Jack, because I'm busy with my lecture on Free Woman. You've something important to tell me. Don't you think I know every word already? Haven't I heard it a hundred times before? Something quite new! You want to be married. Oh, Jack, Jack, the old story. What, eh! you're going to propose to Lucy Grahame. My dear Jack, of course it's nothing to do with me, but a vainer, more frivolous, empty-headed girl—and not even pretty. No; I consider her positively plain. You can please yourself, Jack, but I must say I never thought it would come to this. Why, she actually insulted me the other night. She said you cared

more for her than you did for me, and now she'll believe it, that's the worst. I don't know when I've felt so aggravated. It's not of course that I'm jealous, that would be too absurd, but I know so well she's not the sort of girl to make you happy, and—and I should like you to be happy, Jack. Now the wife you want is a sensible, calm, strong-minded woman. Do I know one who would suit you? Oh, I'm no advocate of marriage. I preach to emancipate women from the trammels of—I declare you've put everything out of my head with your foolishness. Marry Lucy Grahame, indeed! If it were not for my lectures, and plans, and theories, I would—there's no sacrifice I would not make to prevent such a calamity. I would—what, marry you myself, Jack? You can't want both of us. Oh, you'd be satisfied with me, would you? What shall I say? Women have performed deeds as heroic before now; have given up friends, kindred—but have they ever given up a theory? I wonder if married women are more free than single ones. I think I've heard people say so. And you know, Jack, women *must* be free. Free to improve their minds, elevate their minds, change their minds. No, I didn't mean that. Leave me a little while to think, Jack. If I don't give you an answer you will go straight and propose to Lucy Grahame. Oh no! don't do that. What! you consider then that I am bound to you. *I! Bound!* and to a man! *Bound!* Good heavens! How, how—I appeal to you—how shall I finish my lecture on Free Woman?

—————
"CURATES WANTED" IN THE OLDEN
TIME.

HERE are two quaint advertisements for curates extracted from old provincial newspapers. The first appeared in 1716, and reads as follows: "If any clergyman of good character has the misfortune to be destitute of preferment, and will accept a curacy of £27 in money yearly, and a horse kept, let him with speed send to Mr. Wilson, bookseller in Boston; Mr. Ross, bookseller in Louth, or the Reverend Mr. Charles Burnett, of Burgh in the Marsh, near Spilsby, in the County of Lincoln, and he may be further satisfied." Curates in our day who talk in such bitter strains about under pay and overwork will be somewhat surprised at the small stipends given in the the olden days. The next advertisement is nearly half a century later: "September 17th, 1764.—A clergyman of good life and behaviour, whose voice is strong, and pronunciation distinct, by applying to the Vicar of Wirksworth, in the County of Derby, may enter upon the Curacy of Wirksworth aforesaid at Michaelmas next, or at such time (not exceeding three months computed from the date of this advertisement) as is consistent with his present engagements. The salary allowed is forty guineas a year, paid quarterly by equal proportions."

It will be observed that the remuneration of the curacy in Derbyshire is much more liberal than the one in Lincolnshire, but the Wirksworth vicar wanted a curate with a "strong voice," and possibly this circumstance was taken into con-

sideration when he fixed the rate of the wages. Writing about Wirksworth we are reminded of a curious epitaph we copied from the graveyard of this church. It is as under:—

"Near this place lies the body of
PHILIP SHULLCROSS,

Once an eminent Quill-driver to the attorneys
of this Town.

He died the 17th of Nov. 1787, aged 67.

Viewing Philip in a moral light, the most prominent and remarkable features in his character were his zeal and invincible attachment to dogs and cats, and his unbounded benevolence towards them, as well as towards his fellow-creatures.

TO THE CRITIC.

Seek not to show the devious paths Phil trod,
Nor tear his frailties from their dread abode;
In modest sculpture let this tombstone tell,
That much esteemed he lived and much regretted fell."

Several specimens of this eminent quill-driver's writing may be seen at Wirksworth, and all are beautiful examples of penmanship.

WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.H.S.

—————
A NOVEL GUIDE.

IN the course of a literary search made by the present writer some time ago, a curious find was made which led to a correspondence with several literary gentlemen, among these being the late Professor E. H. Palmer and Charles G. Leland, the latter better known, perhaps, as "Hans Breitmann." The find related to a curious book called "O Novo Guia de Conversação em Portuguez e Inglez," or "The New Guide to Conversation in Portuguese and English," and which was stated to have been compiled by José da Fonseca and Pedro Carolina. The chief author of the Guide, Fonseca, according to Mr. Leland, made up the book in a very curious way; he knew no English, and not even when compiling his book did he learn anything of the language, and therefore took a book of French dialogues, which he put into English by the help of a dictionary, and then placed this opposite the corresponding Portuguese words or sentences, with very curious results. The work was afterwards printed in London as a literary curiosity, under the title of "A New Guide to the English, by Pedro Carolina," and jestingly dated at Pekin. However, the original book was successful so far that it passed into a second edition at Paris in 1862, and the following is an extract from the preface to that edition:—

"A choice of familiar dialogues, clean of gallicisms and despoiled phrases, it was missing yet to studious portuguese and brasilián youth; and also to persons of other nations that wish to know the portuguese language. We sought all we may do, to correct that want, composing and devising the present little work in two parts. The first includes a greatest vocabulary proper names by alphabetical order; and the second forty-three Dialogues adapted to the usual precisions of the life. For that reason we did pu-

with a scrupulous exactness, a great variety own expressions to english and portuguese idioms; without to attach us selves (as make some others) almost at a literal translation; translation what only will be for to accustom the portuguese pupils, or foreign, to speak very bad of the mentioned idioms. We were increasing this second edition with a phraseology, in the first part, and some familiar letters, anecdotes, idiomisms, proverbs, and to second a coin's index. . . . We expect then who the little book (for the care what we wrote him, and for her typographical correction) that may be worth the acceptance of the studious persons, and especially of the Youth, at which we dedicate him particularly."

Of the dialogues given in the book, and which are called "familiar," though to our readers they may appear sufficiently strange, there follow some examples. No. 8 is one wherein a gentleman, who is having an interview with his tailor, observes regarding a coat.—"He pinches me too much upon stomach;" while in the next one a shoemaker is the person spoken to, and the customer is made to express the extraordinary wish that "You shall make me into slippers." In No. 18 there is a most amusing conversation between an irate gentleman and an evidently dishonest horsedealer: "Here is a horse who have a bad looks. Give mi another; i will not that. He not all know to march, he is pursy, he is foundered. Don't you are ashamed to give me a jade as like? He is udschoed, he is with nails up; it wants to lead to the farrier. He go limp, he is disable, he is blind." However, the gentleman gets mounted at last, and sets off with a companion through a not very safe line of country. "Your pistols are its loads?—No, i forgot to buy gun powder and balls.—Let us prick.—Go us more fast never i was seen a so much bad beast, she will not nor to bring forward no to put back.—Strek him the bridle, hold him the reins sharters, pique strongly, make to marsh him.—I have pricked him enough but can't to make march him.—Go down, i shall make march.—Take care, that be not give you a foot kicks.—Then he kicks, for that I looks?—Sook here if I knew to tame hix."

Another of these dialogues begins with a conversation between a visitor and a servant. "Is your master to home?—Yes, sir.—Is it up?—No, sir; he sleep yet. I go make that he get up. . . It come in one's?—How is it you in bed are yet?—Yesterday at evening I was to bed so late that i may not rising me soon that morning." After this confession of late hours, there is a description of what led to them. "What game?—To the picket.—Who have prevailed upon?—I have gained ten lewis.—Till at what o'clock its had play one?—Until two o'clock after midnight." After a little more talk the visitor takes his leave. "Adieu, my deer, i leave you. If can see you at six o'clock to the hotel, we swill dine together."

After the dialogues we are favoured with letters from eminent persons, and by way of sample of these here is one from Madame Sevigne, having at least the merit of being brief:—

"Madame of Sevigne at their Daughter.

"I write you every day; it is a jay which give me most favourable as all who beg me some letters. They will to have them for to appear before you, and me i don't ask better."

Following these again are anecdotes, mostly old, but as here given they are certainly very new. A few of these may be given.

"John II. Portugal King, had taken his party immediately. He had in her court castilians ambassadors coming for treat of the peace. As they had kept in leng the negotiation he did them two papers in one from which he had wrote peace and on the other war—telling them, 'Choice you!'"

The next is one about a wedding:—

"A little master frizzled perfumed and covered of gold, had leaded to the chnrch for to marry a coquetish to the dye glistening the parson, having considered a minute that disfigured couple, told him, 'Now before to pronounce the *conjunto* let avow me for fear of *quidproquo* which from both is the bride?'"

With two more, one about Philip of Macedonia and another of a wedding, we pass from this portion of the Guide:—

"Philip, King Macedonia, being fall, and seeing the extension of her body drawed upon the dust was cry—'Greats Gods! that we may have little part in this Univers!'"

"A young man to which Cornelius made agreed her daughter in marriage being obliged for the state of their business to renounce that come in the morning to the fatter for draw out her wood go till her cabinet and expose him the motives of her conduct. 'Ah, gentleman!' reply Cornelius, 'don't you can without interrup me to talk of that at my wife.'"

Passing over altogether the "Familiar Phrases," and the very curious "Vocabulary of greatest proper names," with its pronunciation, we need only refer shortly to the "Idiotisms and Proverbs," which is perhaps the most amusing portion of this novel Guide. Old friends are here only faintly recognizable, for it is not easy to see that "To take occasion by the hair," means "To take time by the forelock," or that "Make of a stone two blows," is supposed to suggest "Killing two birds with one stone." Others are—

"What come in to me for an ear yet out for another."

"He is not so devil as he is black."

"A take is better than two you shall have."

"To buy a cat in a pocket."

"To come back at their muttons."

"So many go the jar to spring that at last rest there."

"Take out the live coals with the hand of the cat."

"Which not risk nothing, has anything."

"A thing is tell and another thing is make."

"There is not any ruler without a exception."

"Four eyes does see better than two."

"Keep the chesnut of the fire with the hand of the cat."

"The walls have hearsay."

"He is like the fish into the water."

This Portuguese Guide proved a great source of fun to a number of literary gentlemen in London, many of them writing paragraphs and verses in what they were pleased to call the Fonseca dialect. Some lines of this kind we received from Professor Palmer, who wrote them out from memory, and, as might perhaps be expected and excused from their nature, these were defective. Since the

lamented death of the Professor in Egypt, a friend of his who was in possession of a perfect copy of the original lines, has supplied us with the following, which we are nearly certain has never in its complete form been in type before:—

FOR TO MAKE THE COURT.

(A Poetry on the Fonseca.)

I don't had any greatest treats
As sit him in a gay parterre,
For sniff one's up his perfumes sweet
Of much red roses buttoning there.

But who it want my friendly miss
Which make to blush the self-red rose,
Oh ! than I was the flower what kiss
The end's tip of her splendid nose.

Who I had envy of to be
Which herb neat her pantoffles push ;
Ah ! too much happy seemeth one
The margaret which her vestige crush.

The sing birds gurgles on the bough,
Them put out a superior note,
But she is a agreeablest row
What bubbles from my miss's throat.

The heaven space it seemed me blue
(I anciently approved the skies),
It want to be the robbed her hue
At charmant miss's cobalt eyes.

I will to meet her nose at nose,
And take occasion for the hair,
And make a statement all my woes
Than she in fine agree my prayer.

Wilt thou, she quothed, love me alone
And cease of ever more to roame ?
But yes ! I tell her for the stone
What roll not heap up any foam.

THE ENVOY.

I don't had any greatest treat
As set him in one gay parterre,
With madame which is two mere sweet
As every roses buttoning there.

W. T. DOBSON.

BLACKBEETLES.

THE uninviting insect, usually designated a "blackbeetle" is, in reality, a reddish-brown cockroach, otherwise "light-shanner," and is ordinarily found inhabiting dark, damp, noisome places; thus in strictly clean, sanitary, wholesome dwelling houses cockroaches should be a practical impossibility. Its scientific appellation is *Blatta orientalis*. It is one of the genus Orthoptera, and is allied to leaf insects, such as grasshoppers. It

may not be generally known that the male cockroach has the power of flying; it may be seen making its aerial peregrinations in the dusky-twilight, and can even fly over the roofs of dwelling houses. The female does not appear to possess wings, or, if so, they are too short for use. Cockroach egg-cases resemble brown coffee beans, and may be found stowed away in myriads behind crevices in chimney-places, and in other dark, warm, soft receptacles. The insect emerges from these curious looking seed-cases perfectly colourless, and as small as a flea in size. Various methods of annihilation are essayed on these insect pests; but few are effectual. The hedgehog is occasionally introduced to effect a clearance; he, however, is not particularly cleanly in his habits, nor quiet in his movements at night, when in pursuit of his nocturnal prey; more especially should any *impedimenta* in the shape of stray sticks or umbrellas be left in the way. Besides, the hapless hedgehog generally dies unexpectedly from starvation. He should be supplied with milk and bread, and even with an occasional bone, when in domestic captivity, and not trodden on too often by the heel of the "pampered domestic." Chloride of lime, judiciously thrown into their haunts, will sensibly diminish cockroaches, and a tempting mixture of flour, arsenic and dripping, will further decimate their numbers. We were diverted on one occasion, after having carefully prepared a basin half filled with sweetened beer, and having arranged sticks of firewood to serve as tiny ladders for the ascent of the band of cockroaches, to observe one large and sagacious paterfamilias, evidently disgusted by the tipsy impetuosity of the young members of the fraternity, clamber carefully up the sticks, take a leisurely survey: balance himself nicely, and holding on by his hind legs, indulge in a moderated sip of nectar; then he as cautiously descended and retired, licking his lips. After some deliberation he made a second, a third, a fourth essay; then we knew his fate was sealed. Each drink made him more daring, and less capable of maintaining his balance; at last over he toppled, and lay, ignominiously tipsy, at the bottom of the basin, a solemn warning of the fatal effects of too often repeated indiscretion.

In the economy of Nature, these noisome insects may act a not unimportant part by clearing away noxious or decaying substances, which might otherwise putrefy, and thus become inimical to health. It is said that the ancient, and still more objectionable insects, "children of filth," known as "Norfolk Howards," cannot exist where cockroaches abound; and there is also another redeeming virtue attributed to cockroaches, namely, that when roasted, and reduced to fine powder, they can be administered internally, as an efficacious remedy in the hitherto incurable malady known as "Bright's disease."

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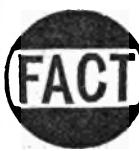


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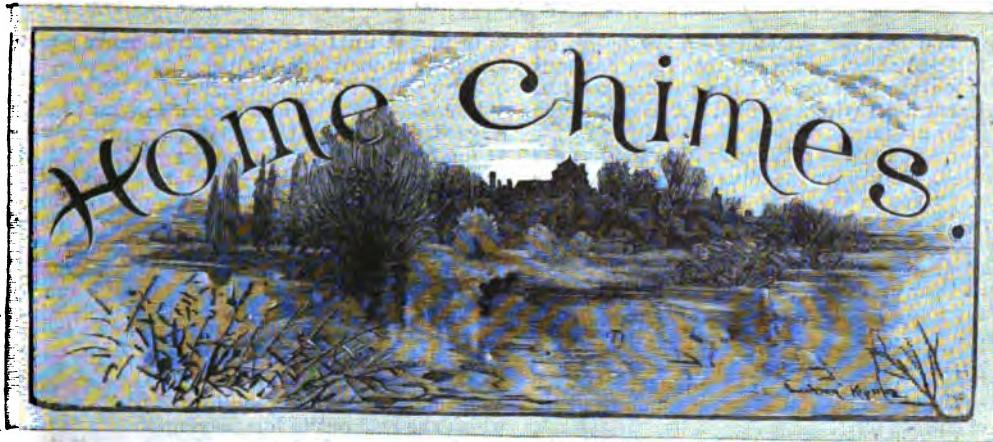
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LONDON: SEPTEMBER 12, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

S A L V A G E.

BY THEO. GIFT,

Author of "Lil Lorimer," "Pretty Miss Bellew," "Visited on the Children," &c. &c.

"I THINK I have about come to the end of my rope," said Paul Royston as he stopped.

In truth it seemed as if he had.

A man does not get down to the lowest depths of starvation and misery in a minute; yet it is certain that he who has been living well and luxuriously in the past gets there far quicker than those habituated by experience to half empty stomachs and shirtless backs.

It was two days ago since Paul's landlady said to him—

"Look here, Mr. Royston, or Capting, or whatever you calls yourself, I can't go on a-keeping you this way. If you ain't got the money to pay for these rooms you hadn't ought to ha' took them. Here it's five weeks that I haven't seen a penny from you, an' me a widder dependin' on the rooms for my livin'. You can't go on staying in 'em for nothin'. Taint to be expected as I should let you."

"No," said Paul thoughtfully, "it isn't. That seems reasonable," he added after a moment's pause. "When do you want me to go?"

The woman stared at him a little. She had expected a string of remonstrances, and was prepared to answer them. Acquiescence being unanswerable becomes under such circumstances irritating, almost insulting.

"Well, sir, that's as you please," she retorted, suspicion seizing hold of her that this easiness of consent implied equal easiness of resource; "a long of course as you pays me first."

"Exactly," said Paul; "but that is the difficulty. I have no money to pay you."

Then she opened on him the vials of her wrath. Needs not to waste paper in translating them. The Billingsgate of an irate London landlady is of

a copious and florid order, and being generally eked out by frequent repetitions, would be more likely to weary than interest those not concerned in it. Paul stood up at the end—or what seemed to be the end—very wearily. He had listened so far out of a sense of honour. If the woman couldn't have her money, she ought at least to be allowed that dearer right of women than any coin—her tongue.

"Well," he said, "I shouldn't think you could say any more. It would only tire you, and there's no good in that. I wish for your sake there were. I can't pay you; but of course you can keep my trunk. There's not much in it but my brushes and a shirt or two; but I daresay you can get a few shillings for them."

Then he went out. He had had no food since noon of the previous day. He had no great-coat (that had gone the week before, while he was still holding out in the search for work), and it was raining—a chilly, unpleasant day in October. He walked about or sat on benches in the parks the greater part of that day and afternoon; and towards evening, when the pangs of hunger got keen within him, went under the shadow of a railway bridge for a few seconds, reappearing with a small bundle in his hand, which he took with him to the nearest pawnbroker's. The man shook it open—it was a waistcoat—looked at the name of the Bond Street tailor on the inside band, pointed out relentlessly a bit of frayed binding here, and worn button there, noted with a quick, sham-careless glance the ill-suppressed air of disgust and impatience with which Paul stood awaiting his answer, and said glibly—

"I'll give y' a shilling on it. It ain't worth that; but as you're a gentleman—"

He would have been prepared to give eighteen-pence, if there had been beating down, or Paul had not been a gentleman; but the latter simply answered, "Give it me," and passed out again. A woman came forth with him. She had been entreating with tears and sobs on her own part, and shrill wailings from the infant in her arms, that

they would lend her something—a few pence, on the tattered shawl which she took from her head to lay on the counter, and the pawnbroker had laughed at her, saying he would not have it if she left it for nothing.

"Curse you!" she said savagely to Paul as she retreated, wrapping the dingy rag round her again. "You're the lucky one to-night; but it's always the way. You're a *man*, you are. You've only got your dirty self to feed: not a starving baby at your breast. It's for themselves men spouts their weskits, not their wives—curse 'em!"

Paul looked at her, a queer bitterness in his eyes.

"No," he said slowly, "you're right. I've no child, and no wife now, not even to feed; but the curses don't wait for you to call them down; they fall of themselves."

He gave her sixpence out of the shilling as he spoke, and went on quickly. Where was the good of waiting to hear the maudling, incoherent thanks launched at him by such a gutter waif of womanhood!

The remaining sixpence got him some supper, however, and a bed at a common lodging-house for that night, and all next day he spent sitting on a bench in Kensington Gardens, or walking about as before. When night came he walked about still. It was too cold to spare any more of his clothes for pawning, and the thought of that lodging-house bed gave him a sickening shudder; yet his feet were sore and swollen, and the gnawing at his stomach dreadful. Once a man from his own club passed him talking to another.

"Come and dine with me," he was saying. "Bobby White's coming. Nothing swell, you know; only a cut of good mutton and a roast pheasant; but I'll promise you some prime Madeira."

Paul, who had turned his face to a shop window to avoid recognition, felt as though he could have groaned aloud; and yet the man was one whom he never would have asked to dine with him when they were in the same regiment. What was hunger bringing him down to!

He kept about all next day in the same way. Once yesterday in the Gardens he thought he had seen a lady he knew coming towards him; so he avoided them to-day, and found rest on the benches along the Embankment instead; but it was raining off and on, the raw wind off the river chilled him; and, as night came on, restlessness and the cold of his aching limbs drove him back to the lighter and more crowded neighbourhood of the Strand and Piccadilly. Even as he did so, however, he felt as if the end had about come. His hands, feet, and head were stone cold; there was a mist before his eyes, a singing in his ears, and twice he staggered and nearly fell, forced at last to hold on by a piece of wall to drag himself up again.

"What's the matter with you? Are you ill, or starving, or only drunk?" said a voice at his shoulder.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock, at the corner of St. Martin's Lane and Charing Cross. The girl who spoke must have seen him stumble and heard the groan with which he tried to recover himself, muttering—

"Yes; it's about the end now. What a fool I was to leave the Embankment. The river was so near, and it's only a jump. Better than dropping here

to be picked up by the police and make a paragraph for to-morrow's 'dailies.'"

"Are you ill?" the girl said again.

She was only a bit of a creature, dressed out in a good deal of that tawdry finery which very young females of certain classes—God help their vanity, poor little souls!—affect, not even pretty, but rosy and pert-looking, with a quick, sympathetic voice. Paul looked at her in a queer, dizzled way.

"Not ill enough for the hospital, nor drunk," he said, trying to speak easily, and wondering why he could only whisper. "I didn't jostle against you, did I?"

She did not answer at first, but gave his handsome, white face a good stare under the gaslight, and, fumbling in her pocket, produced sixpence, which she held out to him, saying—

"Anyway, you look too good to starve, if that's what's the matter. I'm going back to my supper. Get yourself some with this; there's a cookshop a bit higher up."

A kind of wolfish glitter came into Paul's eyes at the word. His hand opened suddenly, and then clenched itself.

"Thank you," he said, "I—won't rob you. Thanks all the same."

The girl looked surprised. She was too familiar with faces on the London streets not to have read rightly the expression which had flashed over his an instant back.

"Why?" she said bluntly. "You ain't proud, are you? I ain't and I can spare it. Bless you! if I was sick an' hungry I'd take help from a chimney-sweep or a beggar; an' you ain't either o' them, I can see that; you're a broken-down gent, you are."

"Thank you," said Paul again, with a little hollow laugh. He looked at her once more, at the gaslight glittering on the big sham gold locket at her round throat, the jingling, sham silver bangles on her young red wrists, the wildly-frizzled fringe and atrocious hat with its garden of artificial flowers. "You're discerning, my dear, and—kind; but—put up your money like a good girl, or—or I might *take* it unawares! I am hungry—too hungry for honesty, let alone pride; but all the same—see here, child, I don't want to offend you; but a 'gent,' as you call it, must be more broken down even than I to take silver from a girl which she may have had to — God in heaven, no! The river's better than *that*."

"My earnings come from the 'bacconist's where I'm employed," said the girl sharply. Then, colouring up, "Do you think they must needs be got dishonest 'cause I'm out late a'count o' their bein' the last to shut up! That's perlite of you, certainly! Thank you for nothing," and she went off in a huff.

When offended dignity had carried her about twenty yards, however, it cooled. She turned back as suddenly, went to the corner and peeped. He was not coming after her. He was not there at all. The gas lamps still shone flickeringly on the wet pavement where he had stood, and by-and-by showed her something black lying out in the road a few yards from where Paul had stood—something half on and half off the kerb. She ran back and saw that it was he, and that he had fainted.

When Paul reopened his eyes it was to the hot,

stinging sensation of spirits in his mouth and throat. His hat was off, and he was sitting on the kerb, his back propped against the lamp-post, and the girl standing beside him with his hat in one hand and a wine-glass about half-full of whisky in the other. As he lifted his head to look at her she stooped down and gave him some more, and then, pointing to a fourpenny pork-pie on his knees, bade him imperiously "eat that!"

Paul put out his hand to her.

"Tell me what your name is first."

"Polly. Why d'you want to know?"

"God bless you, Polly, and thank you. I once boasted I could read any woman with a glance. I find I can't read the youngest and simplest. Please forgive me."

"Oh, let that alone," she said laughing. "I didn't mind. B'lieve I liked you the better for it. Eat that pie up an' don't talk."

And he obeyed.

As he did so, the girl, watching him shrewdly, noted his white slender hands and well-shaped nails, the square cut of his shoulders and soft silkiness of his hair and long brown moustache. She noticed, too, that he was not very young, not one who had fallen in the first struggle with Life, but after long hand-to-hand fight with her. There were lines on his brow and about his mouth which youthful troubles could scarce have ploughed so deep. Something tugged at Polly's kind little heart.

"Where are you going now?" she asked when he had finished. "Not—not to the river as you said?"

Paul looked gratefully at her.

"No, my child, that would be ungenerous—to-night."

"Where then?" (but she hadn't understood him).

"Well, I think—to take a walk, Polly," he said smiling a little, "and you had better go home. It's raining, and you are wet already." But Polly was meditating.

"You haven't got a home," she said shortly, as if with the addition, "deny that if you can." "Well, I'm thinking I can get you a night's lodging what won't cost you anything, nor" (reading resistance in his eye) "nor me either. Come along. My! it do rain!"

She trotted off at a brisk pace and Paul followed. What else was he to do? She had saved his life a moment back, and was evidently disposed to be masterful with the salvage; but when, after two or three turnings and windings, they stood on the step of a dingy-looking house, in a dingy street, and Polly drew out a key, he thought it time to inquire further.

"What is this lodging, child?"

"Oh, a decent enough one. There's all sorts here; but Mrs. 'Orrock's pertickler. She don't allow anybody what isn't quiet and respectable. There's never no rows here. You just say nothing to nobody, but go in an' right upstairs to the top o' the house. There's two doors there, the right hand one's mine, an' you're welcome to the room this night anyway. Taint big, but it's clean; an' look 'ere, here's some matches. There's a benzine lamp on the drawers; but I dursn't leave the matches along of it, for Mrs. 'Orrock's gurl can't 'elp stealing 'em."

She had rattled all this out in a breath as

though to prevent his interrupting her; but he did not attempt to do so, but only stood looking down at her fresh girlish face with a half pitying, half questioning glance which puzzled her. In truth she puzzled him. He asked very gently:

"You are offering me *your* room, Polly. Is it rude to ask what you mean to do with yourself?"

"Oh, I shouldn't be using it to-night anyway," she answered quickly. "I'm going to sleep with a friend o' mine. She was a queer one too, poor thing, but a few weeks back she was took very ill, an' that's how I come to know her. The doctor says it's rapid kersumption, an' she's dying of it. I sleep' with her last night so's to give her a hand when the coughin' fits came on; an' I was goin' to do so to-night; so you see you can have my room an' no hurt to anybody."

"Not if I were a thief and stole all your belongings?" said Paul. "Have you thought of that, my girl, or are you as trusting as you are charitable?"

"Well—not gen'rally," said Polly, her bright eyes meeting his with a frank, unabashed stare; "but somehow I don't believe you are a thief. It hasn't paid with you if you are; an' anyhow I've got my week's sal'ry in my pocket, an' there's nothin' to steal up there except a few clothes an' some chiney ornaments what wouldn't be any good to you. There! go along an' keep quiet, or some one'll hear you."

"You don't mean to say you won't tell your landlady you have lent your room to me?"

"Oh, there ain't no call for that. Mrs. 'Orrock's awful good-natured, and never asks no questions, so long as you keeps yourself to yourself and pays reg'lar."

"And you live here all by yourself! Polly, how old are you?"

"Eighteen nearly. Lor yes, I've lived here ever since I came up to London. When mother died, three years back, I hadn't got any one else belongin' to me but old granny, bless her, an' she lives down in Essex still."

The pity in Paul's eyes deepened. This was how girls lived in the great city, unmothered, unwatched, with a landlady who *asked no questions*, and sin, shame, and temptation on every side; live! aye, and keep themselves pure and decent, God only knowing how.

Paul took off his hat reverently.

"I vexed you once to-night by saying 'no' to you, Polly," he said; "I won't do so again. Instead, I'll ask you to do something more for me. Tell your landlady where you are sleeping to-night, and that you've lent your room to me. If there's a key to it she might lock me in."

And then he went upstairs. It did not need more than a glance round the poor little attic room, with its bare floor, truckle bed, yellow painted chest of drawers, and one chair and table, to show that Polly's indifference to her tenant's honesty might well be unaffected. Even the "chiney" ornaments alluded to were of a sort beneath the lowest art criticism, and as to literary resources, they were baldly suggested by a couple of cheap journals and a shabby little black Bible with the inscription—

"Polly Gregg. Sunday School Prize. From the

Rev. Jeremiah Short, Midsummer, 188—" written with many flourishes on the fly-leaf, and a photograph of a decent-looking middle-aged

woman wearing a widow's cap carefully folded within.

Paul shut the volume softly, almost with a sense of shame, put the key in the outside of the door and went to bed. It was more than five years since he had said a prayer; but he did say one that night—for Polly.

It was bright morning when he woke. Having no means of rewarding his kindly entertainer, his man's pride had determined him to burden her hospitality no longer than gratitude needed, but to take himself off with the first peep of dawn, leaving only a written line of acknowledgment behind him; but fatigue, the utter, hopeless fatigue of those days and nights of hungry, aimless wanderings, chained him to the hard little bed and held his eyelids sealed for more hours than he had counted for, and he unclosed them only to hear eight rung out in deep resonant strokes from some neighbouring church tower.

Paul sprang up hastily, flung on such of his clothes as he had laid aside, made a hasty wash by means of a jug of water and a basin he found in a corner of the room; and after scribbling a line of warm thanks and blessings on a strip of paper, torn from the margin of one of the old journals, was hurrying from the room when he stumbled and almost fell over a girl who was seated on the second step of the stairs eating her breakfast as coolly as if that were the normal place for such refections.

It was Polly, of course: bangles, locket, newly frizzled fringe, gorgeous hat and all—fresher cheeked perhaps, and more innocently vulgar in the morning, just as Paul showed older and more refined and worn looking; but it was he who looked the most embarrassed of the two. She faced him with the acute severity of a detective.

"I thought you'd try that," she said, "an' I come out here a-purpose to stop you. I shouldn't call it civil to want to clear out without even saying good-morning to a person, especially as I didn't want no thanks."

"I know you didn't," said Paul, "but it's because I have nothing *but* thanks to give you that I was going so. I have said them—upstairs."

"All right, then, don't begin over again. You're very welcome to what you've had, an' to your breakfast into the bargain if you'll have it. Here it is, waiting." And she pointed to a mug of tea and slice of thick bread and butter on the step beside her.

"Mrs. Orrock gave me that for you," she went on as Paul tried to remonstrate. "She did, and charged nothing for it either. I told you she was a rare, good-natured old soul, an' when she 'eard what sort you were she just poured out the tea without a word."

"And what sort was that?" asked Paul curiously, a faint smile trembling under the long moustache which Polly secretly admired.

"Why, a gentleman as'd come to grief," the girl answered coolly. "How did you do it, if it ain't rude to ask?"

"How!" His face darkened bitterly. "By the three factors that generally bring grief to a man: ill-luck, the devil, and a woman! Don't ask me for my story, little Polly. It's not a pleasant one, and the last chapter of it is enough. You can see that."

"You ain't an old man," said Polly quietly;

"so there's no call for you to talk of 'last chapters' that I can see. I s'pose you've lost your money an' are out o' work, eh?"

Paul nodded.

"Can't you get any? You've tried, I s'pose?"

"So long, Polly, that I'm afraid but for you I should have come to the end of my long life (the 'last chapter' in very truth), before the end of my search."

"What sort of work was you looking for?"

"Any sort, my little girl, that a fine gentleman who has never learnt but one trade, and is prevented following that, can turn his hand to."

"Oh—you *was* in trade then?" said Polly. She was evidently disappointed. "What was the line? Not"—reflectively—"not 'airdressing'?"

Paul laughed.

"No, Polly, nought to do with hair save hair triggers. My trade was killing other people; but unfortunately some one stopped me at that by trying to kill me and putting a bullet through my elbow here. Perhaps that's one reason why I find other work no easier to get."

"But can't you do *anything* with it?" asked Polly, regarding the arm pitifully.

"Nothing that requires strength. I can write but not even that very well, or very quickly. I'm a bad job, I fear, Polly, 'misfortune's toy thrown out upon the dust, its bells all broken, e'en its mouthpiece rust.' There's rhyme if not reason for you."

The girl stood up looking at him earnestly.

"You didn't make that up yourself, did you?"

"I believe I did. Why?"

"Well, somehow you said it as if you did. Lor', now, do you think you could write poetry if you tried?"

"I have been guilty of such a thing now and then. I won't vouch for the quality."

"What! real verses, with nice rhymes that folks would print? I say now, think! Do you believe you could make rhymes like they uses for advertisements in the papers?"

Paul laughed again.

"I think I could do as much as that," he said sardonically, but was taken up short.

"I don't suppose though—gents learn most things at college, I know—but I don't suppose as it's likely you can draw pictures too?"

"I can't paint, if you mean that, my child. I can draw little pen and ink sketches of people. Shall I draw one of you before I go?"

"Could you?"

"I fancy so, after a fashion."

"What, and of other girls—real lovely girls in fancy costumes, and with their legs crossed, or swinging in hammocks with cigarettes in their mouths?"

Polly was greatly excited.

"I believe I am capable of even those—heights."

The damsel seized the two empty mugs and rushed away with them, returning in a vast hurry and buttoning her jacket as she ran.

"You come along with me straight to our shop," she said panting. "I ought to be there now, and I believe you're just the man the guy'nor wants; that is if—if you're not above it."

"I above anything!" said Paul ironically. "What did you save me from last night? Do as you like with me now—I owe you so much liberty at least."

That day he was engaged to make original sketches and verses for the backs of Mr. Israel Beck's cigar boxes and the advertisements of Mr. Israel Beck's cigars. He did his first sketch in a little room at the back of the tobacconist's shop, and gave so much satisfaction by it that Mr. Beck paid him five shillings on the spot, with the sole condition that he should not use his talents for any one else in the trade.

"Shwear that, sir," he said, "and I'll take care you don't looch by it. I've a friend—a gentleman in the ladies' garter line that wantsh the very same sort o' thing to make hish specialities known. A man azn can draw a leg like you wazh made for him. I'll recommend you."

Paul swore, and the bargain was made.

He walked home that night with Polly—she radiant, chirping like a sparrow; he smiling, half sad, half humorous, doubting verily if it was not all a dream.

At the door she paused and said—

"You won't want my room to-night?"

"Thank you a thousand times—no, Polly."

"Have you got a lodgung yet?"

"I haven't had time even to think of one."

"Because I know Mrs. 'Orrocks 'as a room—better than mine—on the floor below, back of Mrs. Trevor's, the sick woman I told you of. It's cheap too, only three shillings a week."

"Let us go in and ask her to let it me," said Paul.

Why not? The lodgings that were good enough for the tobacconist's "young lady" were certainly good enough for his hack writer.

A new life had begun with him. Polly had introduced him to it. He resigned himself, half in joke, half in gratitude, to let her strange its initiatory details; and once entered on it, resolved, with a kind of bitier resignedness, to put his foot on the past and stamp it out for ever. After all, was not this better?—clean, at any rate, and sane; with neither false love nor false friends in it. If to look back even was maddening, why not tie a bandage over one's eyes, and go on as though those other days had never been?

Naturally he saw a good deal of Polly in the new ones. Most of his bizarre work was done in his own room, but there was constant going to and fro between his employer (the ambitious little tobacconist who had "ideas" of his own in particular), and in this way he had an opportunity of seeing the young lady in her professional life, exchanging smart jokes, repartees, and cajoleries from behind the counter with the second or third-rate young men—the 'Arries and Johnnies and "old chappies" who frequented Mr. Beck's emporium in the Tottenham Court Road.

Polly was equally popular and impartial among them, her bright good nature and sharp tongue making her feared as well as liked by the youths, who sucked at their big cigars longer than needful, for the sake of a bit of chaff with the rosy-cheeked young shopwoman; but she told Paul in confidence that they were a "pack of noodles, and she didn't care that for one of them. Miss Flower (another of the 'young ladies') let two of 'em treat her to a run down to Brighton last Bank 'oliday; but though she went too, she paid for herself all the way. She wasn't going to be beholden to

boys who, likely as not, hadn't enough to keep theirselves."

But, besides a pleasant word now and then in the shop, Paul had others, when she would put her head in at his door for a chat on her return home after work was over, or during the walk back in the evening, for which he somehow found himself pledged far oftener than he realized, and even deriving more amusement and distraction from her naive, eager talk and childish questions than he would have liked to acknowledge.

Of the rest of the establishment he saw little. Mrs. Horrocks proved her "let alone" character by living in the basement as much as possible, and seldom showing on the upper surface of the world more than once a day. The front dining-room was let to a pair of sisters, ballet girls from the Valhalla Music Hall, very young, pretty, and smart damsels, who smoked the strongest cigarettes with which Polly could supply them, stayed in bed all Sunday when they didn't go jinketing under male escort; and were given to disturbing the slumbers of the rest of the house by their shrill peals of laughter and high, bright voices when they returned home at night. But though a rowdy and voluble young couple, they were neither depraved nor actually disreputable, and probably stood far higher in the scale of social virtue than the quietly-dressed, soft-voiced, elegant-looking young lady, who rented all the drawing-room floor, required more attendance than the whole of the house put together, had her windows filled with flowers and closely blinded with lace curtains.

Above her were Paul and the consumptive Mrs. Trevor, who was now entirely confined to her room, whence her hollow, incessant cough and moaning voice could be heard only too plainly; and above them again were Polly and Mrs. Horrocks' "gurl;" while the back dining-room and a small room adjacent were tenanted by a German printer and his wife—a grimy, wild-looking, bony-browed man, who brought in other grimy, bony-browed, wild-looking men—Italians, Germans, and Russians—of an evening; and whom Polly freely called "the Nihilist," explaining the word to mean "a kind o' dynamiter."

The house was certainly as full as a rabbit-warren, and it was a curious study for Paul to watch how smoothly all these separate shady and semi-shady lives ran on, and the strangely indifferent, non-interfering, relations of each to each.

Polly's was almost the only one there with no shady side to it. He saw that for himself, and also that (perhaps for the same reason) she was the only one who had some acquaintance with every one of the others—a restricted acquaintance, however. With Miss Melville, in the drawing-rooms, it never went beyond "Good-morning" or "Good-evening" on the staircase, and that only because it was a moral impossibility with Polly to pass any one without a word of some sort; but her own instinct seemed to hold her back from even desiring further intimacy with the costly-dressed and well-mannered young lady; and even with the frisky maidens below, though she sometimes took tea with them on a Sunday, helped them to "do their hair" and remodel their finery, and not only supplied them

with cigarettes at cost price, but warmly recommended Mr. Beck's customers to patronize their performances at the Valhalla, there was still an invisible line drawn between them; and it was an understood thing that she was never expected to accompany them on their festive excursions, or "drop in" when they had visitors. To the pale, anxious-looking wife of Herr Pfanz, however, Polly was as a very ray of sunshine, chattering to her, asking her questions about Germany, and crying like a child with her over the three hexen-haired children whose little graves—the Mecca of the bereaved mother's heart—were far, far away "im der Vaterland." Over Mrs. Trevor's regrets, on the other hand, Polly didn't cry, evincing, indeed, more angry contempt than sympathy with them; but she devoted herself none the less cordially to their helpless, conscienceless victim, sitting up with her at night, nursing her and cheering her with as much willing kindness and patience as though she had been the friendless creature's nearest relative. Even Mrs. Horrocks, with whom the girl took her tea and breakfast (dinners were provided at the shop), looked on her in quite a different light to the rest of the lodgers, using her quicker wits and brighter eyes for checking confused accounts, or darning yawning stocking-heels, and confiding freely to her those doubts as to the drawing-room's ultimate solvency, and the back dining-room's tendency to bring the notice of the police on the house by his objectionable principles, which at times weighed so heavily on her own aged mind.

"But lor! I makes 'em talk to me," the girl said to Paul. "What's the good of shuttin' oneself up like a rat in a hole! I'm sociable, I am, an' when I lives in a place I likes to make a 'ome of it."

"And you succeed," said Paul gently. "All the same, you might put an H to it, Polly. 'Home is Home,' be it ever so 'omely.'"

He always spoke gently to her, though he could not help teasing her too, partly because it was his nature to do so, and partly because she was so very easy to be teased; but indeed, there was a deep, abiding sense of gratitude to her in his heart, and he would not have been content if he had not been constantly trying to give tangible evidence of it.

For this reason he was always doing what he could to brighten or vary the hard-working monotony of her young life; ready to see her to and from the place of business where she earned her daily bread; to take her for "blows" on the river, or walks in Battersea Park on Sundays; or now and again to one of the less aristocratic theatres (when she could get away early enough) on a week day evening. He bought her small presents, too, ornaments for her room, cheap editions of books belonging to a better class than the penny "dreadfuls," and little articles of feminine finery, all of which the girl accepted with frank delight, and no stronger protest than, "Lor, now, it's too bad of you to be spending your money on me this way." And he told her long stories of life in foreign parts, India, New Brunswick, or the Cape, to which Polly listened with eyes round in wonder, and so many parenthetic questions, that he could hardly get on.

It was an odd companionship truly, this, between a world-worn and wearied ex-captain of

dragoons and man of thirty-five, and a little eighteen-year-old girl from a tobacconist's shop; but then it was no odder than the life he was leading and the trade he had adopted. It all seemed like a dream together: a dream, *bizarre*, incongruous, improbable, and from which he might wake some day to find it gone from him as completely as that other dream before; but meanwhile it would be madness not to make the best of it; and certainly its best part was Polly, and its most soothing, as also its most diverting, element her downright honesty, and naïve, vivacious freshness.

He even derived some amusement from correcting, as we have seen, her frequent errors of speech; and though Polly did not always take kindly to these rebukes, but (as she herself expressed it) "up and sauced him back," it was noticeable that she began to take great care not to repeat the mistakes in question; just as when she discovered (from Paul's comments in their peregrinations past drapers' windows and smartly-attired damsels) that his taste in dress did not, strange to say, run to gorgeous colours, huge fringes, and swinging crinolettes, she even did grievous violence to her own feelings in these respects, and with a self-sacrifice which it need to be a woman to appreciate, did so tone down and sober the normal exuberance of her own toilet and adornments, that Miss Lottie and Poppy Delaville agreed in declaring that "Polly Greg's young man was turning her into a regular Methodist. Supposed she'd take to a 'Salvation' bonnet next." While Mrs. Trevor more bitterly observed, "So that shabby-genteel lover of yours that you're so proud of is trying to make you look like a lady, child. What a fool he must be! Does he think he can change Bass's beer into 'Veuve Cliquot' by putting it in an empty 'cham' bottle!"

Mrs. Horrocks looked on the matter in the same light—with a difference. Greedy, case hardened, and morally pachydermatous as was the old woman, she had still a soft corner in the shrivelled atom which served her for a heart, for the girl who had so persistently crept into it; and she not only averred boldly that she considered Polly quite as good every way as "that lean looking second-floor back," but even went so far, at last, as to tell Paul himself, one day, that she hoped he "meant honestly by the gurl."

"Taint no concern of mine, in course, Mr. Saul" (Paul had quietly given in the Apostle of the Gentiles' first name when asked for his own) "an' no one can say as I meddles with my lodgers, so long's they behaves themselves respectable an' kicks up no scandals or rumpuses, as is things I won't put up with in *my* 'ouse, an' so I told Miss Poppy Delavil the day before yesterday as ever was; but any one with 'alf an eye can see as this aint *your* nateral spear, an' why you've come down to it is best known to yourself, an' would ill become me to pry into, as well knows how often gents come to grief an' as to lie quiet fur awhile; but as you 'ave took up with Polly, an' keeps company open with her, an' she (silly thing!) is a settin' her 'eart on you as 'ard as the nose on my face, I do 'ope, Mr. Saul, as you means honestly by the gurl. She's a good gurl as yet, an' I knows it, an' a gurl as'd be a credit to any young feller's chice; an' if she were to go to the bad thro' a man as she took up with first out o'

nothink but gurlish kind 'eartedness, then, says I, he'd deserve to be whipped. Yes, sir, that I does."

"Only whipped!" said Paul ironically. "That would be a mild chastisement—unless you laid it on. You have very fine, powerful arms, Mrs. Horrocks, as I have often observed; but I hope you will never be called on to use them in Miss Polly's defence. Somehow I don't think—I have a higher opinion of her than you—that she will need them."

But though he spoke thus lightly, the landlady's shrewd eyes detected a startled, worried look upon his face, and she went away feeling that her caution had not been unneeded.

"Polly," said Paul a few days later—it was a bright day in April, and according to a long-standing promise he had taken her to Epping Forest to enjoy the first freshness of the young green leaves and gather primroses—"Do you remember once asking me about myself and how I came down to the straits you saved me from?"

"Yes," said Polly promptly. They had gone down to Chingford third class, as usual, with a number of other excursionists—"Arrys" and "Arriets" of the humbler classes—but had parted from these at the station, and turning their backs on the Forest Hotel, the Connaught Water, and other artificial delights, had plunged into the maze of budding oaks and "thorns in freshest green," till having reached the edge of a slope whence, over rolling plains of verdure, they could see the purple smoke cloud of the great city beyond, they sat down to rest on a fallen tree. "You said it was the devil, a woman, and your own foolishness, and that I wasn't to ask you no more—any more I mean. I don't want to neither."

"No, it is I who want to tell you now," said Paul. "We are old friends by this time, Polly, and friends have a right to know each other's pains and pleasures. God knows there have been few enough of the last in my life, and for the pain—Well, it can all be summed up in one of the words you used just now—a woman! I don't suppose I need to tell you who *she* was, Polly. There is only one woman who has the power to irretrievably mar and curse a man's whole existence—*his wife!*"

There was no answer, but Polly's bared, plump hands, which were cheerfully busied among the lapful of dog violets and primroses they had gathered during their walk, must have grown suddenly unsteady, for a little shower of pale, faintly-tinted blossoms fell rustling on the grass. Paul went on without looking at her.

"I'm not going into details. They wouldn't be fit for you. It's enough to tell you that I was a rich man's son, with a commission in the army, and everything in the world smooth before me; and that I married a woman whom I thought an angel and a saint, too good for this gross world's appreciation, and whom most of the said world—the male portion of it at any rate—knew to be exactly the reverse. Hints of the real state of the case reached my father; but the one fact of the place whence I had taken my wife—a kind of upper class music hall where she sang nightly—would have been sufficient. He refused to receive her or see me, and even threatened to cut me out of his will and discontinue the very considerable

allowance he made me unless I exchanged into an Indian regiment and left England at once.

"That was how I went to India. She was very indignant about it—about the wrong to me as I thought then; but, indeed, she need not have lamented on her own score. India allowed far more scope for her peculiar talents than a formal country-house or even London society would have done; though one thing was manifest from the first. The other ladies in the regiment—most of them at least—would have nothing to do with her. Women have damnable noses for ferreting out anything wrong, and the music-hall story leaked out somehow. Perhaps, too, they were afraid for their husbands. . . .

"She had all the unmarried men at her feet, however; some of the married ones too: that poor fool, her husband, most blindly, most slavishly. Good Heavens! to think how madly I loved that woman, how utterly I believed in her; how ready I would have been to kiss the ground under her feet, or choke the breath out of any one who had dared to say a word against her, when all the while—all the while she was simply amusing herself at my expense, fooling me and betraying me, spending my money wholesale and dragging my name through the dirt till my oldest friends stood aghast in wonder at the blind stupidity of a man who could stand so much and make no sign."

"But, for one thing, we were not often together. Her health, she said, would not stand the climate of the district where my duties held me; and after the birth and death—thank God, it died!—of our only child, she seemed to find the air of the Hill countries still more imperative for her.

"The end came suddenly. There had been hints, veiled warnings from others before; disappointment, anger, even jealousy on my own part; but she always soothed and cajoled the latter away, and the former I put down to envy, Indian gossip, or that old music-hall story. So things went on and the crash came. I was away from home on duty when the news of my dishonour reached me; and by the time I got back it was to find that she had sailed for Europe the previous day with her lover—an intimate friend of my own, and a young sprig of nobility holding a commission in an artillery regiment quartered like my own at Futteyghur—to find also no open-hearted sympathy and kindness in my trouble; nay, not even the pity so poor a dupe might have expected to receive, but cold looks, averted eyes, and brief words of sceptical reprobation of my 'incomprehensible short-sightedness.' What others had seen going on behind my back for months and months they could not, or would not credit, was news startling and annihilating to me. They dared to believe, and show me they believed, that I was that dastardly creature There! we won't speak of it. Two days later I sent in my papers to head-quarters, and left India and the service at the same time.

"Polly, child, would you believe that it was the same thing in England? that when I landed there, stung, betrayed, writhing under the cruellest wrong and outrage any man can suffer from, I found that my miserable story, or rather that version of it current at Futteyghur, had preceded me, that friendly hearts already cooled to me by my marriage, were shut against me now; that women avoided my bow and men my hand; that

my own father wrote to me, through a nephew of his, that he trusted I would not shame him further by putting in an appearance at his house. I and my shameless wife had degraded the family name sufficiently, and he never wished to see me again till the memory of that disgrace was forgotten. My cousin added from himself an earnest hope that I was not meditating seeking a divorce, as, under the circumstances, I should be very likely to lose my case through the intervention of the Queen's Proctor, and so destroy the last chance of a reconciliation with my parents.

"I took his advice, and at the same time the other and better means of vindicating my honour. I left England that day for Paris, where the guilty couple had fled, called out Lord — and fought him. It was his bullet which smashed this elbow of mine, and when I recovered from the illness which followed, it was not to return to the country which had so ill received me, but to wander far away travelling in the States, Mexico, Japan, anywhere and everywhere to drive away thought, and seek some fresh interest in the life which had become suddenly loathsome to me. A bad attack of yellow fever was the end of it. I was for weeks laid up in an hotel in New Orleans; and when I recovered found that I had all but exhausted my available resources, and had to write to the bankers who managed my allowance from home for more.

"They wrote me that the allowance had been stopped six months previously: ever since my father's death!

"Of course I returned to England at once. I had been over two years away. I had corresponded with none except (at rare intervals) my cousin. It was possible that he might have lost my address, or that his letters to me had miscarried. I journeyed home in all haste, and on arriving there found the door shut in my face. My cousin was master there now. My name had not been even mentioned in my father's will, and my cousin's wife declined to receive a man 'of my unfortunate reputation' in her unblemished household! That was only a few months ago. The rest of my story would be nothing but seeking for work and a living, finding neither and sinking hour by hour into lower depths of poverty and starvation. I had sworn an oath that I would never speak to or go near one of those who had known—and failed—me in earlier days, and I kept it. I would have died fifty times over rather than have done the reverse. I *should* have died but for you, Polly. I hope to God, child, you'll never wish I had."

There was a silence. Paul had finished his story, and Polly sat beside him crushing the pink stems of the primroses together into a damp mass in her cold little hand. Her round face was paler than usual, but Paul did not notice it, or look at her, and he still kept his eyes away when she asked suddenly, and with a gulp in her voice as though she had had to swallow something hard beforehand—

"There's one thing you haven't told me. When did she—your wife, I mean—die?"

"She *didn't* die," said Paul. He spoke almost harshly, each word cutting like a knife. "She is living, and my wife still, for aught I know: living the life she lived before I knew her, and rejoicing in it. If she were not"—he stopped abruptly—"we might have done without a future

hell, Polly. The devils are not all in it, nor their power to torture. Even to-day I can feel that, feel it freshly."

He turned to her as he said it with something of an appealing glance; but Polly did not meet it, or say a word of sympathy. The round face had a pinched look, the full lips trembling apart, and the primroses lay all crushed and mangled in a shapeless heap on her knees; but as she felt his gaze on her she started up, and tossing them ruthlessly to the ground, said, with the same gulp in her voice—a hard, queer voice, not Polly's—

"Ah! well, I don't know much about them things. Maybe even she wasn't a devil *always*. Mrs. Horrocks says 'tis the men makes women so most times, and anyway"—with a short, nervous laugh, which might have sounded cruel if it had not been piteous instead—"There's no good thinking of dismal things now. Don't you think we've stayed here long enough? Sitting talking is slow work for a holiday, and those other folks will have drunk up all the tea in the place if we don't go back. Come along, I'm just in the mood for a run."

She started off as she spoke, and Paul followed, slowly. A blackguard would have overtaken her, put his hand on her shoulder and said, "Polly, don't you feel for me?" This man let her leave him behind and took off his hat to her in spirit. He was fifteen years her senior, and knew too well how she felt; but he saw that she had the pluck of fifty fine ladies in her childish bosom, and would have died rather than have let it out, or suffered him to guess that the telling her his story had gone nigh to break her silly heart. She dared not even be pitiful to *him*, and kept up the wildest spirits all day; laughing, chattering, striking up acquaintances among the other pleasure-seekers at the inn where they had tea, and making herself so entirely the life of the party on the way back that even Paul, despite his inward suspicions, felt jarred upon and irritated. He hardly spoke the whole way, and they parted on the lodging-house staircase with a brief "Good night."

He was very busy for the next few days, designing some illustrations for a tailor's large advertisement sheet: work which formed an excuse for not seeing Polly to and from hers as usual; and she, on her part, kept carefully out of his way. Mrs. Horrocks asked him once if he knew what ailed the girl, she was looking so pale and downhearted. But when he answered with apparent frankness that he hadn't an idea, and declared he would ask Polly herself, the landlady observed that maybe it was only the bother of that Trevor woman. She was much worse of late, and nothing would suit that stupid gurl but to stay up night after night with her.

"Wearin' 'erself out an' preventin' me sendin' the miserable creetur to the Infirmary, where she'd be a deal better off," Mrs. Horrocks grumbled. "She'll be dyin' here next, Mr. Saul, I know she will; an' there's not one in a 'undred in my place would risk it. No, I ain't act'ally *out* of pocket by her yet. She's got things as is too valeyable for that, but 'ow do I know as they'll last out till she's buried or better? If it weren't for that little vixen of a gurl she'd go to-morrow. S'help me, that she would."

Polly was to go that very night! It was Sunday.

The German printer's wife was at chapel; the Misses Delaville had gone to Hampton Court with a couple of "friends;" the drawing-room to Brighton. Even Mrs. Horrocks had stepped out to see an acquaintance, and Paul was sitting over some writing when he heard a sudden call for help, and his door was flung open.

"Come, do come!" cried Polly wildly. "She's choking—dying, and the ether—Oh! do hold her up for me while I run and get it."

She flew downstairs as she spoke, and Paul passed into the next room. The sick woman lay in her bed half raised on one elbow, gasping, struggling, clutching for air, the cough rending her. He put his strong arms round her, and lifted her up—poor wretch! it was like lifting a skeleton—but as her head fell back against his shoulder, the great hollow eyes met his in a wild, terrified, ghastly stare.

"You! You!" she shrieked out. "Paul! You—here! Oh—" the voice gurgled suddenly, and stopped. There was a quick, swift reddening of the white lips, the thin striving hands, even the bedclothes.

As Polly flew back to the room, panting and breathless, Paul met her at the door, and stopped her. His face had grown suddenly old, grey and pinched. He looked as if he had seen a ghost.

"Don't go in," he said, holding her. "It is all over. You did your best for her, but—but she doesn't want anything more now. She is dead."

* * * *

They buried her two days later. Women of Mrs. Trevor's class seldom have any friends or relations to mourn for them. She, poor sinner, hadn't one; and the end of the "valey'bles" had been so much more nearly reached than Mrs. Horrocks guessed, that but for Paul she would have had only a pauper's funeral and a pauper's grave. It was he who went out and made all the arrangements for the interment, not even telling Polly what he was doing, and silencing her wondering praise of his goodness with the curt remark—

"Tush! You nursed this woman for months yourself, and thought nothing of it. Why should you think more of my helping to bury her?"

But he did more than that. When the coffin was taken out of its modest hearse, he stood bare-headed and strangely pale beside the grave into which it was lowered, and even lingered there after the tender-hearted Polly, who had not found it in her to let her late patient go unattended to her last rest, had turned sobbingly away. She thought with a thrill that he must have come for her sake, and meant to see her home; but he did not, and she wondered and cried the more, feeling somehow as if the death of this friendless outcast had left her friendless too.

For several days after that they saw less than ever of each other. Poppy Delaville asked Polly if her young man had quarrelled with her, and Mrs. Horrocks chaffed her, with a blunt caution under the jest.

The girl flashed out like a lucifer match at each—hot, fluttering, ready to cry or fight—and let tears get the better when she was alone; but night came, and with the morning she had conquered even them.

She was coming home on the following evening from her work, when, to her surprise, Paul met her in the old way, and asked her if she would not take a turn with him in the cool before they went in.

For a minute Polly hesitated; then colouring scarlet, agreed, and they went on together, not saying much to one another, but pacing slowly along in the summer twilight. They were turning for the second time on one of the bridges when she said suddenly—

"It's getting late. Do you know why I came with you to-night?"

"Because I asked you, I suppose, Polly. It's very good of you, for I forgot you would be wanting your supper."

"My supper? Oh, well, I'm going back to it now; but—but I think I'll say good-bye first. I've got a bit o' news for you. I'm going away."

"Going away!"

There was surprise, admiration, approval even in Paul's voice; scarcely sorrow, or she would have read it. Her lips quivered childishly at his heartlessness; but her eyes kept bright and hard.

"Yes, I'm gettin' tired o' London. I don't like this part; and—and every one wants a change some time; so I've given notice to old Beck and wrote to granny that I'm coming down to stay with her a bit. I think I shall try for a place at Stratford; she'd be glad to have me there, and it's better for folks to keep together if they can."

"If they cap. Yes, you're right, Polly," said Paul simply; "but what will they do without you at the lodgings? Mrs. Horrocks will be heart-broken. She said to-day she felt as if the house was emptying when I told her I was going."

"You!" She turned round on him, pulling her arm out of his, her cheeks white; "you going too!"

"Why not, if you do?"

"But you said—it isn't because—you said you had spoken to Mrs. Horrocks, and she doesn't know yet about me."

"True. I haven't told you my news yet, though I brought you out here to do so. Yesterday in the Strand I met a man whom I once knew well in California. There was no escaping him; he recognized me at once. In fact, I had saved his life once, and we were great chums. As he gripped my hand he told me he had been hunting for me high and low ever since he landed in England, had even advertised for me in the papers—do the people wanted ever see those advertisements I wonder?—and was quite overcome with joy at meeting me. He has an immense tract of land in South California, chiefly corn and vineyards; and he wants me to go back with him next month as overseer. It's a good post—£400 a year, house and servants and firewood thrown in. What do you say to it, Polly?"

"Say?" She had turned from white to red and white again. No wonder he was glad; but—California! She could contemplate going away herself; but he!—it felt like death to her. Yet her pride made one effort yet. "What did you say? 'Yes,' I suppose. Why, it's grand, grand for you," she said, with a brave smile at

him. It might have been the ghost of one of Polly's smiles; but no matter!

"I said I would answer when I had consulted a friend: the only one who has a right to dispose of me. It isn't grand, Polly, but it's comfortable and better than Mrs. Horrocks. I think you'd like it."

"Me!" I don't know what you mean," she stammered, stepping a little back from him, her colour mounting hotly.

"I mean," he said, putting out his hand to her, they were standing in one of the embrasures of the bridge, looking down on the lazy ruffled water, the "Lights of London" twinkling faintly through a blue, misty haze, "that this good fortune—thank God for it!—will be no good to me unless you share it. Will you come with me, Polly?"

For a moment the little shop-girl looked at him, her eyes big and glazed in dumb reproach. Then a flash of contempt came into them and transfigured her like a sunray. "And your wife!" she said bitterly. "Have you forgotten her or—Oh! I did think you thought better of me than that!"

"I have no wife," said Paul, solemnly, "and I owe it to you, child, that I can remember her today without hate or vengeance. She is dead, Polly, and you and I stood beside her grave only a few weeks back. You did not know who the woman was you nursed so pitifully, so kindly; and I—if you had not called me in that day I should never have guessed it. Polly, my dear, you know my story; I've told you all about it. Will you take up the life she ruined and you saved, and try to make something of it. I'm not worth your taking, but—but I think you can trust me. I will try to be a good husband to you."

* * * * *

They were married a month later, and sailed for California on the following day. It was the wisest thing Paul had ever done, for she was the very stuff for a settler's wife, and—she adored him.

VICTOR HUGO.

HE was a man who could not but be great
Where most men must be little. Thence
it came

His greatness his own greatness put to shame,
Since with itself it did illuminate

Huge fault with vaster glory. His estate

Was kingly, and his overshadowing name

Arched like a sky the continents with his fame.

Withal, his soul (commixt of love and hate,

Love of things lovely, hate of all things vile)

Was Europe's conscience. Like a sword his pen

Stabbed, when it pierced a tyrant to the brain

Who had no heart to pierce; in a child's smile

He tasted heaven. This above all was he:

The very voice and soul of Liberty.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

A WET DAY AT BRISTOL.

BY PAUL BENISON.

THE meaning of the first syllable of Whit-Monday is not certain. But should the signification be *white*, the last anniversary was not of that degree of auspiciousness which would claim for it to be marked in ancient fashion, with chalk. The weather was funereal from sunrise to sunset. Rain—and yet rain. Anticipated trees and green banks; fair scenery and genial sunshine—these things never came off. Instead of them the public-house became a refuge; nothing more rural was realized than bagatelle and dominoes and cards, and the atmosphere was not so much ozone as—drink.

I was bound for Bristol, and, as a man fond of letters, should have liked to have taken up my quarters at the Bush, where Mr. Winkle went in search of Arabella Allen; but alas! that hostelry no longer exists, and has given place to a bank. I was received elsewhere, and if I could flatter myself I was on the site of the ancient White Lion, there was small trace indeed of it in the Grand Hotel which has superseded that famous coaching house. It seems difficult to know wherefore people shrink from perpetuating these picturesque old names. The White Lion sounds to me perfectly charming. And why, oh why, have the proprietors of *Felix Farley's Journal*, a time-honoured print, rechristened it the *Bristol Times*? The Grand Hotel is most conveniently central; and, protected by an umbrella, I sallied forth, and behold! a few steps brought me to the cross ways, where Corn and Wine, Broad and High Streets debouch into a *piazzetta* once occupied by the High Cross, an historical monument of great interest, which the Bristolians have not only permitted to be removed from its site, where it was perhaps out of place, or at least in the way, but even out of the city. As I stood at the corner, exactly opposite was the shop of Hayward, bookseller. The house is comparatively recent, but on the very spot stood the book shop of Amos Cottle at the beginning of the century. This was the publisher, himself a poet, who encouraged the first efforts of Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.*

Byron made great fun in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* of

"Beostian Cottle, rich Bristowa's boast,"

but he had, at any rate, the merit of discovering and appreciating genius.

It was in lodgings near College Green, that Coleridge got up the fantastic dream of emigration to some far island whose air was to be purer and more exhilarating than ours, and where Pantisocracy was to overrule the more complicated arrangements of civilization. Happy youth! happy period—when to make roads at Ruskin's bidding seems so right, and to sail forth to convert Chineses, so hopeful a task!

In those days—perhaps of the three, Southey seemed the most noteworthy. He was industrious and able—an ardent student—ready of pen and

* The portraits of the three as they then appeared are in the National Portrait Gallery. These pictures were once the property of Cottle.

overflowing with poetical exuberance. At the present period, Wordsworth is established for all time, as the poet of poetically minded thinkers—the elevating relaxation of intellectually employed men—the delight of the cultivated clergy; and in some of his pieces as a national representative voice. Coleridge is daily gaining ground with those who look chiefly to the artistic side of poetry, though perhaps he is never likely to be largely popular. But poor Southey is out of it altogether.

He had boundless confidence in himself, and thought that the world would not willingly allow his works to perish. Byron, who ridiculed mercilessly his more eccentric performances, said, nevertheless, that posterity would select the best of his poems. But posterity has not done so—posterity has ignored them. *Kehama* was wholly un-Indian, but *Thalaba* caught, in some measure, the freedom and delight of the desert, and was not devoid of the true local colouring of lands dominated by the Prophet. Both poems, too, were interesting, but they have joined his epics in the land where all things are forgotten.

Reciters preserve for us as a coup de théâtre, the Cataract at Lodore, or naïvely re-iterate Peterkin's embarrassing question about the benefit of Blenheim. All else is lost. And so with Southey's prose works—little remains but the *Nelson*. He was born at No. 9 in Wine Street, close by. Corn and wine sound so plentiful and affluent, that one is vexed to be told that wine is a corruption of wynch, and that the word referred to the pillory, and some horrible way of twisting people. Before entering Christchurch, where Southey was baptized, look at the curious old house in front of Hayward's! It is said to have been sent over from Holland, and is a half-timber fabric, remarkable for its parge work. This was an achievement in plaster with patterns and raised ornaments. The building is abominably inconvenient and must come down, but as there is a capital Museum at Bristol, some portions of the wood and of the plaster work may be preserved, especially the grotesque fat man, whose effigy forms a bracket in the lower story. And here it may be said generally, that the picturesqueness of Bristol must disappear. The authorities are in earnest about wider streets, and the abolition of the crowded alleys into which the poor are stuffed. And God speed them! Lovers as we may innocently be of quaint gables and pitched roofs, one cannot wish fever-haunted lanes to continue, because they make effective vistas from higher ground. There have been more than once at Bristol, ominous warnings of the danger of leaving the poor to fester and rot in ancient tenements with façades which suit water-colour treatment. It is historical that at the time of the Reform Bill under cover of political excitement, the neglected dregs of an overflowing population swarmed out of their slums—their whitened sepulchres, fair without and foul within—and assailed with cruel earnestness, wealth and respectability. They pillaged and burnt a fair quarter of the town, and, drunk on stolen wine, fell, many of them, into the flames they had themselves ignited; and the rest would not desist from havoc, till the cavalry charged in fierce reality, and English streets were wet with English blood.

On going into Christchurch one finds not the

actual building Southey was christened in, but a classical temple erected in its place, dating from 1793. In the last century, particularly at the beginning of it, people were actuated by a sincere desire to provide places where men might worship God. But heaven forgive their thick heads, what a way they set about it! They either whitewashed an existing church throughout, and filled it with cubicles or sleeping berths in ponderous wood-work, ornamenting with blue angels, Queen Anne's initials and gilt commandments; or else they pulled it to the ground, and built up a quasi classical fabric in its stead. The clergyman has done the best he could with his classical temple at Christchurch—he has coloured it with pale and cool patterns, and introduced gilt where he could. The eye is appeased though not satisfied. Churches being one of the few sights available by reason of the wet, I went in for these interesting memorials, and of course visited the judiciously restored St. Mary Redcliffe, the Temple Church and others. But this paper being a conversation piece must not trench on the province of the guide-book, but may better make room for some moral reflections on Chatterton and another local celebrity recently deceased. First, however, to conveniently dispose of the narrator, it may be said that when he was not in a church, he might have been found in a tram-car. This system of conveyance has been carried to great perfection in the city of Bristol. From Clifton, from the Hot Wells, and from Bedminster, lines completely traverse every district from end to end. Getting into a car marked Eastville, the narrator was wafted through world-known streets, the Broad Weir, the Broad Mead, Old Market, &c., till a long slope was reached, leaving the city below, and called Stapleton Road, a suburban thoroughfare running between houses of very moderate importance. One of these looked much like the residence of a country doctor. A not imposing, irregular building with adjuncts attached. But the brass plate bearing the name Dr. W. G. Grace, awoke interest at once, as calling attention to the quiet, respectable home where the great cricketer attends to the corporeal ailments of such as think right to commit their mortal frames to his good offices. Long may he himself escape both disease and its remedies.

Wet days like fair ones come to an end, and with a tribute to the consistency at least of this Whit-monday, for it never faltered in its determine unpleasantness, I ensconced myself by a small fire (really a small May fire), and fell into some meditation. My shrines and tramcars were over, the historical drone of intelligent sextons mingled in memory with the "Fares, please" of the little boy guards—all the Bristol cars employ boys—but I had seen a statue of Chatterton, and had observed the walls placarded with "Called Back" at the Prince's Theatre, and the cases of two very different men were brought strangely before me in one view.

It is very easy to censure Horace Walpole, and say that he ought to have known Chatterton was a genius; and was bound, at once, to have exerted himself to do something for the young stranger. All this comes very well after the event. But Chatterton must have been objectionable in many respects. He was not likely to have had decent manners or a presentable appearance. It has

been universally agreed to condone his tricks in the little chamber over the porch of St. Mary's Redcliffe, and to represent his Rowley poems as a pardonable and ingenious device for introducing himself to the public. But he must have told a great many fibs, and certainly required some seclusion to recover his veracity. It seems strange that people came down so severely on Young Ireland (the Erin junior of Mr. Payn's "Talk of the Town"), and do not weary in writing tragedies about, and erecting statues in honour of, the other, for conduct similar in kind though not in degree. Of course it may be said that Ireland was a blockhead, and Chatterton a genius; but this scarcely justifies the different moral treatment, or at least treatments differing so widely. It is truly lamentable that Chatterton should have perished as he did. But he was a very headstrong, excitable, overwrought young fellow, and does not appear to have been suited for the profession of a literary man in any marked way. A man may be a poet, and quite inefficient for general press work. It is not clear that Horace Walpole or anybody else was especially to blame. If when genius is neglected, somebody must be made the scapegoat, who is to be censured about this Mr. Fargus, for whom England is sorry, and Bristol now especially lamenting? He was getting on for forty when he died, and had had to work away for long years at his profession of an auctioneer, without any encouragement of a literary kind. Whenever he had leisure he seems to have written, but nobody ever found out that he could write. Even when he did make a hit, how did he make it? Not by a London publisher's reader discovering that amongst the manuscripts submitted to him one was of unusual merit. Nothing of the kind. The author gave his tale to a local publisher to start a little obscure series. He did not know he had achieved anything good, nor did the publisher; and the transaction between them was conducted on such moderate terms as would befit the insignificant character (so it appeared to all parties) of the venture. Then arose the three hundred thousand purchasers of this brochure, and wasted the good auctioneer (who, like Katterfelto, had his hair on end at his own wonders) to notoriety, and employment and prospective affluence. Whether some reviewer made a good shot, or whether the three hundred thousand judged for themselves, or whether the whole thing was a fluke—nobody knows. What followed was very sad; just when success was secured, to have to die! Fred. Fargus, as he was familiarly called, was greatly liked in Bristol. He was one of the ringers of the beautiful tower of St. Stephen, and his fellow-craftsmen have subscribed one hundred pounds for a memorial of him. Whilst, by quite a separate movement, the Mayor and Corporation have determined to put up a tablet to his memory in the cathedral.

But how could he have grown so old, and yet no one know that he could write?

There seems no answer except that the neglect of the art of criticism leaves the public quite unable to detect the germs of great gifts. How is the general reader to equip himself with the necessary capacity for telling whether what he is reading is good or bad, when the professional guides are themselves so sadly abroad?

It would not be true to state that attempts are not made in the present day to analyze very closely, and with much acumen, the reasons why acknowledged excellence is excellent.

But these efforts are so marred by partisanship and extravagance—by such pronounced admiration or repugnance—that the results are chiefly misleading. This is the garden of criticism planted by Coleridge and watered by Charles Lamb, but it has run to an exuberance indicative of decay; the flowers are flaunting and the fragrance rank. And what are we to say of the usual journalistic judgments pronounced on new works? Fiction seems to come off worse than any branch. A list of opinions might be drawn up for and against almost every novel that is published. Of course a production may please one person and not another, but the differences of estimate are often particularized, and exactly stultify each other. The style is the best thing, the style is the worst thing; the plot is very probable, the plot is impossible; the characters are capitally drawn, the characters are mere daubs; we fell to sleep over the first chapter, we sat up all night till the whole was finished.

Perhaps some of this uncertainty is due to the disuse of select notices, and a desire to embrace the whole circle of publication, in any particular kind. To entrust a great bundle of volumes—sometimes seventeen, nineteen, or more—to a single writer, who is to survey—say the fiction—of a short definite period, is to impose a task which cannot be performed, and, let it be added, should not be undertaken by a person of self-respect. It is currently reported that curates and lady-helps perform these comprehensive duties of literature. But this may be scandal. At any rate, the work appears to be done, on the whole, as well as the circumstances permit. The well-known novelists are described by their well-known qualities. One is renowned for his scenes of country life—his cows, ponds, and so on; another is only at home in Pall Mall; a third takes us to Italy, a fourth to America.

Criticism, thus handled, is comparatively easy and safe, and, it may be admitted, can by practice be made discriminative and amusing, without much recourse to the reading faculty. But how about a new author? There is not time to really examine him, and nothing remains but to praise very cautiously in a series of sentences pretty well qualifying each other, or to hold him up to ridicule.

It is difficult to believe that anybody can be deceived. The author knows his book has not been opened. The editor knows that no critic could read nineteen volumes in an evening. The critic does not think it much matters; and the public, by this time, must have observed that it is a chance, for the most part, whether a new book is praised or blamed. But the system goes on. And yet, for the benefit of publishers and the public, it is the beginners—the new blood, the unknown writers—to whom most especial attention should be paid by the critics and caterers. And if they devoted more care to this point, our Hugh Conways would not reach middle-age without raising any suspicion that they were gifted men.

THREE OFFERS.

BY E. CHILTON,

Author of "Wade's Daughter," &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND OFFER.

IT has been said that Cicely knew no one well; but there were kind hearts among her acquaintance, and in these sad days she received many kind notes with offers of miscellaneous assistance, or, in some cases, invitations—homes laid open to her until she could “form her plans,” and so forth. One or two ladies came in person and asked to see her, but Cicely would see no one. She sent Timpkins down stairs with messages of thanks—earnest thanks—but with, in every instance, refusals. She was getting ready to go away: this was all she would say to any one of her intentions. The clergyman of the parish was a young man—a bachelor lately appointed; he had no power to serve her. “The poor child, what does she mean?” “Where is she going?” said the charitable ladies, but their solicitudes were fruitless.

Mr. Alfred Duberg had not allowed himself to be outdone by others. Immediately upon ascertaining the state of affairs, he volunteered to continue to her a home at Wilcroft; at all events, he added, qualifying his first words, until further arrangements could be made. His wife and family would join her ere long. And when he had consulted with Mrs. Duberg, he should be able, he hoped, to see his way to an annuity—a large one he could not promise, the claims of his own family being paramount—but sufficient for maintenance. He was surprised by Cicely’s blindness in declining to be dependent upon him in any way whatever. He took care to make it known throughout the neighbourhood that he had done his part; that if Cicely came to actual want it would be by her own fault. For the present, as he was glad to find, she had money in hand.

In private, to his wife, he declaimed upon the folly of lifting people out of their stations. The girl was just what one might expect—proud and uppish, with a magnified notion of her own importance. Because he did not propose to follow his cousin’s example, and adopt her, she would have nothing at all of him. He would be willing to do anything in reason; and in time, no doubt, they might have placed her in some comfortable situation. But she had confessed to having money in hand, and she must take her own way.

He had returned to his family a day or two after the funeral, to arrange their removal to Wilcroft. Cicely was resolved to be gone before he came back.

In the summer twilight of the evening following his departure, she stole downstairs. For the first time since he arrived she felt free again; she had felt herself an intruder—as he also evidently regarded her—before; dreading to meet him whenever she left her own chamber. But with the freedom blended sadness unutterable. How alike

was this to that other evening only a week ago! the sky was just as softly tinted, and yonder shone the same star. She looked into the dining-room: there he had sat talking in that gentle, dreamy way about her mother. There was the stool which she had drawn to his feet. . . . Ah, he was with her mother now! he had explained all! . . . She threw herself into his chair, buried her face in the cushion where his head had rested, and once more her grief found vent in bitter tears. She did not hear a ring at the outer bell, followed by steps in the hall; but when the heavy oak door was thrown open, she started up, bewildered. Almost it seemed to her that her godfather had come back—that the week just passed was a dream. But no! this was a young man’s form, the first glimpse of whom brought back in a rush bright days that had ended—only a week ago also? or before the Flood?

“I beg your pardon, Miss Cicely,” said Jones, behind him; “I did not know you were downstairs. Mr. Egmont has brought a note.”

“A note from Lady Anne—but you will let me tell you instead. I—I—wanted to see you,” stammered Kenneth Egmont, taking a step forward. Jones paused an instant: then retired, closing the door.

A long silence followed. Cicely was still bewildered. She sat motionless, her hands clasped on her knee, her dim and aching eyes looking straight before her into the twilight.

“Cicely—Miss Fenwick,” said the young man, at last; “may I speak to you? Will you listen if I explain something—with reference to Lady Anne’s note?”

He remained standing at some distance, and still she did not move, or ask him to be seated. But she replied, very coldly, that she would listen.

“Lady Anne wants to have you at Linton. She will drive over here herself to-morrow; and this note is to beg you to be ready to go back with her. And I wished—knowing that otherwise you would refuse—to tell you that I shall not be there; I am going away early to-morrow: and also that neither she nor her family have any notion of—of—I cannot mention it—you remember.”

“Of the bet,” said Cicely, in a clear voice.

“If they had dreamed of such a thing, they would never have had me down here. Young Linton is not in our club. The only two in these parts who know, and who were at the dance—I conclude that, somehow, it was through them you heard of it; it was one of them who first suggested the idea—they are gone to Scotland. When I met them last week, before—that scene with you—I told them that I would give worlds to recall what I had done; and I swore them both over to secrecy. They would keep their word at least; you need have no dread of—of anything unpleasant, anything to remind you of this, if you go to Linton.”

“I am very grateful to Lady Anne; but I cannot go to Linton,” said Cicely.

She rose as if to dismiss him, but he came still a step nearer.

“Will you hear me one moment more?” he said, “I entreat you to hear me.”

“What is the use of it?” asked Cicely; but she sat down again, and he went on.

"Here is the note;" he laid it on the table. "It is stamped, you see—I took it out of the letter box; Lady Anne thinks it is gone by post. She would not have chosen to send it by me, and I could not tell her how I longed for some excuse to speak to you."

As by a sudden impulse, he knelt before her.

"Cicely," he cried, "forgive me—forgive me."

The girl started to her feet.

"Mr. Egmont! oh, don't!" she cried, confusedly.

"Just say that you forgive me. I am going to-morrow. I cannot rest unless I hear you say it."

"I do forgive you," answered Cicely, in a broken voice. He thanked her very humbly, and rose.

As he stood facing her, looking so tall and manly—so manly, that what in another might have seemed abject, in him seemed only noble—the contrast between all she had thought of him, and all that she had discovered, smote Cicely with sudden force.

"Yes, I forgive you; but you have changed the whole world for me," she cried, her constraint giving way. "The world and my life! I believed in every one and everything before. Now—I have had such kind letters, but I cannot help doubting them; I cannot help thinking, suppose I acted on what they say! And worse than that—in higher matters. Are there any such things at all as love and truth? Yes, if you had really loved me, and death had parted us, that would have been dreadful—but not like this!"

He interrupted her.

"I beg of you to say no more; I can imagine it all; every word is a stab to me. Only don't say, 'if I had really loved you,' in that, at least, I have put on no false colours. I am not worthy to speak of it, but God knows that I do love you. I would lay down my life for you, if I could. Even as things are, if you would let me, there is a way in which I might prove it."

"Go on, if you like," said Cicely, as he paused and looked at her, as asking her leave to speak further.

"First, may I explain? That—that black-guardly thing you have been told of. I did not begin it in cold blood. We were a lot of thoughtless young fellows together; and, if you will consider, I had never seen you then. If you could only look into my heart and know how I have loathed myself since I have seen you! I will confess everything. After that odious affair at the club, I thought I would just run down with the Lintons, and get an introduction to you—not to you, but to the heiress I had heard of. But when I saw you yourself, everything was altered. It was not an evil scheme any more, but a passionate hope. . . . My whole nature has changed since I knew you, Cicely; you, and my love for you, have raised and purified me altogether—for ever, I hope. I want to be different. I don't want to go back to what I was before. You say you forgive. If you would—if you would—" The young man paused again, flushed and breathless.

"Yes!" said Cicely; "I would rather hear all now."

"Oh, if you would let me prove the truth of what I am saying! If you would let me show you that it is no mere sentimental repentance! For weeks I have abhorred even the thought of—of— If I had not loved you as I did, I should

have given it up long ago, and gone away I can't recall what I have done in the past. But I can try, every day of my life, to atone for it, if you will let me—if you will give me the right to protect you, to work for you—"

"You know that I am left penniless?"

"Can you ask? Well! I deserve all. But I must speak, whether you trust me or not. Yes, of course I know; and when I heard, my first thought was selfish—a flash of wild joy at the opportunity. Cicely, cannot you believe that there is such a thing as repentance? If you will promise to be my wife as soon as I get clear; I will set to work at once. I know a way; and while I am working, I will strive to grow more worthy of you. I will make another home for you. I will give you back as much as possible of what you have lost. I have been an idle scoundrel; but that is over. If you will give me a trial, you shall see. I feel a new life begun in me."

Cicely glanced at him, and even in the growing dusk was struck by the fire in his eye, the resolution kindling his whole countenance. Then she remembered how, on that last evening, she had wished to be penniless, that she might prove his truth. Her wish was granted now.

But she shook her head, and turned away from the reviving fascination.

"I said that I forgave you," she answered, "but I cannot forget so quickly. We could not be truly happy. You are excited now—and there is something higher than I to work for."

"Ah, you are like the rest of the world. You don't believe in repentance," he said bitterly.

"I believe repentance must be tested; and I would rather not be the person to test yours. I am glad you have said all this. It has given me back a shadow of my old faith. But only a shadow as yet. Now we must part."

"And where are you going? what are you going to do?"

"I am not quite certain; but I have ideas. I will depend upon other people no more."

"You are terribly proud! Well, if it be any consolation, you may know that from this moment I shall have no rest. I care for you far too much to endure the thought that you are knocking about the world—such a world as it is, too!—with only that resolution to support you."

"You had better forget me," said Cicely. "Good-bye."

"I shall never forget you," he returned with abrupt vehemence. Then, as if not daring to trust himself further, he wrung her hand hurriedly, and was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

A SCHOOLMISTRESS.

ONWARD—onward. Away from the green country, from the pastures of plenty, the rich grass continually reproducing itself as richer milk and butter—from the cottages with their orchards and pretty gardens—from the farms, the peaceful vicarages, the houses amid parks and preserves. Away from the country life, the stillness, the leisure, the monotony varied only by change of seasons, the lotus-eating solitude. Already these

seemed memories of another world, as the train steamed away into the black country.

Cicely looked out in wonder at the furnaces, the mountains of shale, the gloomy factories, the dirty canals, the begrimed and stunted figures scattered among them.

"And these have been here all the time," she thought, "while life was like one long summer's day at Wilcroft!"

When, a few hours before, she had looked her last upon that beloved home, she had felt as though life, all she valued in life, were over; the world was darkened for evermore, she thought. But now, on a sudden, a new spirit awoke within her. Scales fell from her eyes; and she saw.

"All these years I have been like Wordsworth's Lesser Celandine, living only for myself—screened myself, and forgetting others. Yes, forgetting the great world—the world of fashion is only a crumb of it—the great, wide world, so full of people, and I so dead to them! Well, I am shaken out of my niche now; and oh, the work! I can't hide in a sheltered corner any more, and I can't be happy; but I can work."

Timpkins, when that night she tucked her darling up in bed, having done her best to prevent the girl from missing her usual comforts,—unpacking her things, and going out, after the long hot journey, to hire a bath, and procure, at her own expense, various small indulgences—Timpkins was astonished by the reviving light in the eyes of late so tearful.

"Why, missy!" she cried, "you look for all the world as if——"

"As if we were going back to-morrow?" returned Cicely, as the old servant caught herself up with sudden vehemence. "Ah, Timp! I'm afraid you expected no end of trouble with me this evening."

"Trouble, my deary! There's no such word as trouble where you're concerned; though sister, she did observe (while I was seeing to your muffin), 'Sarah,' she says, shaking her head, an old habit with sister, similar to eyebrows with me, missy, from a child, 'Sarah, I doubt there'll be a broken 'art in Mary Anne's bed this night.' 'Sister,' I says, 'silence to your forebodings.' But I feared me she was quite correct."

"And now you're taken by surprise, Timp! Mrs. Walker was quite right though; my heart has been broken, but it was too small to be of much use to any one outside myself, so the breakage is all for the best, perhaps. I shall go in for a different sort of heart now, Timp."

Timpkins still looked puzzled, but asked no questions. The poor young thing's head was a bit turned, she thought.

Sure for the absolute necessities of the case, and for Cicely's immovable resolution, Timpkins could never have brought herself to sanction, still less connive at, the undertaking this day begun. While Cicely slept in peace and dreamed of a new life, the old nurse lay wakeful, sorely exercised. Had she done right or wrong to fall in so readily with the plan concocted by her young mistress's inexperienced brain? To hide it, too, so cleverly and carefully that the Wilcroft neighbourhood, left behind, had not a notion whither Mr. Duberg's petted godchild was gone. What would that dear master himself have said? thought Timp. She almost sprang from her bed in horror, as this

question crossed her mind. Miss Cicely Fenwick installed in the stuffy little room lately discarded by Timpkins's niece, Mary Anne! A little room about ten feet square, overlooking a little back yard, and confronting black back precincts of squalid houses, surmounted by the tall and smoky chimneys of the manufacturing city of Halbury! Still worse, in Timpkin's eyes, about to be installed—should the preliminary examination prove successful—in Mary Anne's place in another sense, as assistant mistress of the Halbury National Schools! The very possibility of such a position was owing to Mary Anne; Mary Anne had strongly recommended her, had contrived to interest influential members of the school committee in her favour.

And now, first of all, she must study till she wore herself out, thought Timpkins, to pass the examination; fortunately the holidays had just begun—there would be time to prepare for competition, three weeks hence, with other candidates. But afterwards, if she succeeded, she must toil as a teacher: "among children as wasn't fit to be touched by her, no, not with a extra long handled pair of tongs!"

"Why, it 'ud be enough to bring his grey hairs stark staring to his grave, if they wasn't there already!" cried Timpkins aloud, awaking her decrating sister, Mrs. Walker, who had been dreaming of Mary Anne at her side.

"Oh, deary, dear! I fear me it's that fowl as lays heavy," said she in a thin tone of lamentation; "and there I'd planned it so careful. I'd thought it 'ud be something like the calf, for your coming home, fine and delicate, though not altogether fatted. And to think it should disagree!"

"Sister!" returned Timpkins with reproachful dignity; "is it probable that I, who come from halls where every delicacy of the season was at command, should be upset by a familiar roast fowl? No, it's my blessed Miss Cicely, who is to me what Mary Anne is to you. I could almost find it in my heart, only for the thought of them young persons as is setting 'emselves up to vie with her—and the greater number of 'em such as Mr. Jones and me could never have brought ourselves to sit down with at Wilcroft—if it wasn't for that thought, I do declare I could hope she mightn't pass!"

But Cicely did pass. Her early education, in the simple subjects in which she was now preliminarily tested, proved to have been more thorough than she had supposed. A little study had soon refreshed her memory, and the tone of general cultivation, the evidences of "mind" in her answers, favourably impressed the inspector. She succeeded, to the triumph of Timpkins, in outdoing "them young persons," and was formally appointed assistant mistress, with the prospect of qualifying herself, by pains and experience, for a certificate in the future.

"It shall be a first-class certificate too, Timp; I'm determined on that. And then some day I shall have a school of my own, with such a salary! and a nice little house, where you shall spend your old age, when you're tired of dressmaking."

For Timpkins had "set up" as a dressmaker—in which capacity she achieved great success. And meanwhile she waited, as of old, upon Cicely, who continued to lodge under her wing in Mrs

Walker's little house; and learned to endure the sight of Cicely's setting forth every morning, hot or cold, wet or dry, in sober garments which soon became only too suitable to her position, to work for her daily bread in the Halbury schools.

(To be concluded next week.)

MORE UNREASONABLE REMEDIES.

BY VANDYKE BROWN.

THE interesting list of cases published in the March Number of *HOME CHIMES*, by no means exhausts the subject, nor are there wanting evidences to show that superstitious observances play a very prominent part, even now, in the art of healing. I am slightly acquainted with a tradesman who avows himself "cured by faith" after the doctors have given up all hope; and I have just received a visit from a young lady who has lately adopted some of the strangest possible formulas for the cure of deafness.

Perhaps the most noticeable—certainly the most disgusting—is the following:—"A number of earthworms are placed in a wide-mouthed glass bottle, covered with stout paper, and buried in a heap of manure. After a while, the worms resolve themselves into an oily liquid, which being dripped into the ear at stated intervals is said to procure at last the long-despaired-of restoration of hearing.

Most of us are familiar with the schoolboy theory that a door-key, if placed near the spine, is a certain cure for bleeding at the nose; but few would care to wear an iron curtain-ring over the heart, as a guard against rupturing a blood-vessel.

In some places it is the custom for a widower to wear around his neck a piece of blue ribbon, to which is attached his dead wife's wedding-ring: the object being to prevent the dear departed from affrighting her sorrowing lord by a too-hasty and violent return to the haunts favoured by her in the more substantial form of her existence.

I have before me a quaint little work on "The Toilet of Flora." When or by whom it was published, I have no means of ascertaining, as the title-page seems to have fallen a victim to the raid of some curiosity-hunter. But, after all, the date can have little to do with the recipes, which include the following:—

"*Powder to prevent Baldness.*—Powder your head with powdered parsley-seed, three nights every year, and the hair will never fall off."

The author does not say what nights are best suited to the purpose—so I make bold to suggest the first three nights in April as being at any rate somewhat appropriate.

To quicken the growth of hair, the reader is advised to "dip the teeth of his comb every morning in the expressed juice of nettles, and comb the hair the wrong way."

There are a number of formulas for effecting a change in the colour of the hair and beard—not the least germane being burnt cork—though the list includes "roots of the holm-oak, and caper-tree; barks of willow, walnut, and pomegranate; leaves of artichokes (*sic.*), the mulberry-tree, fig-tree, raspberry-bush (*sic.*), shells of beans, gall and cypress nuts; leaves of myrtle; green shells

of walnuts; ivy-berries, cockle and red-beet seeds, poppy-flowers, alum, and most preparations of lead."

We now come to what—if our author may be credited—is the most marvellous distillation under the sun. It is called "The Celestial Water," and its properties are thus enumerated: "If a person rubs himself in the morning with this water on the forehead, eyelids, back of the head, and nape of the neck, it renders him quick and easy of conception, strengthens the memory, enlivens the spirits, and marvellously comforts the sight; by putting a few drops with a bit of cotton up the nostrils, it becomes a sovereign cephalic, and cleanses the brain of all superfluous cold and catarrhal humours; if a tablespoonful is drank every third day, it preserves the body in its full vigour, and in such good case, that beauty lasts even to decrepid old age. It is a noble remedy against shortness of breath, corrects it when bad, and possesses several other virtues, which we have not room to mention at present."

Then follow recipes for balm-waters, including "the celebrated Eau de Carmes," and a German sweet scented water, which is penetrating and incisive, admirably revives the vital spirits, removes headaches, comforts the heart, is excellent against unwholesome air, and of course a certain preservative from contagion. "An Imperial Water," takes away wrinkles, and renders the skin extremely delicate; it also whitens the teeth and cures the toothache, sweetens the breath and strengthens the gums." If all this were capable of demonstration, we could well believe the author when he tells us that "foreign ladies prize it highly."

A beautifying wash consists of equal parts of white tansey and rhubarb water, to every half-pint of which has been added two drachms of sal armoniac (*sic.*). Another, called "Venice Water," is thus prepared:—"In the month of May, take two quarts of a black cow's milk, pour it into a bottle with eight lemons and four oranges, sliced; add an ounce of sugar-candy, and half an ounce of borax; distill in a water-bath or sand heat." This water is said to be "counterfeited at Bagdad in Persia,"—six sheep's trotters occupying a noticeable place in the list of ingredients used in the spurious wash.

A balsamic water consists of "Venice turpentine, oil of bays, galbanum, gum arabic, ivy gum, frankincense, myrrh, hepatic aloes, aloes-wood, galangals, cloves, comfrey, cinnamon, nutmeg, zedoary, ginger, white dittany, borax, musk, amber-grease, and brandy. This "will be good to strengthen the limbs, and cause that beauty and vigour, which so amazingly delights the eye."

"The Fountain of Youth," is a truly wonderful cosmetic, as it is only necessary for the elderly belle to wash herself in it at night, and with weak barley-water in the morning, whereupon her complexion will assume a youthful air. The distilled water of green pineapples is also accredited with similar virtues.

"White pigeons" and "young pigeons," are especially favoured in the lists of ingredients, as are also white lilies, white leaves, white-wine vinegar and the whites of eggs. One proceeding in the preparation of a lotion to fasten the teeth and sweeten the breath, consists in plunging a red-hot poker four several times into an earthen

or stone jar, containing three pints of water; and the recipe for a lip-salve concludes with the remark: "Gentry may add a few drops of oil of rhodium, and some leaf gold." But one of the most curious conceits in the volume, is "A secret to take away wrinkles. It runs thus:—"Heat an iron shovel red-hot, throw thereon some powder of myrrh, receive the smoke in your face, covering the head with a napkin to collect the smoke, and prevent its being dissipated. Repeat this operation three times, then heat the shovel again, and when fiery hot spirt on it a mouthful of white wine. Receive the vapour of the wine also in your face, and repeat it three times. Continue this proceeding every night and morning as long as you find occasion."

For the cure of warts our author does not resort to the notching of a piece of alder, nor does he bury a triangular piece of "bull beef." His most trusted wart-remover is a pared pippin, "which being rubbed on the warts, causes them to entirely waste away in the course of a few days."

This must close my references to "the Toilet of Flora," but ere the printer rests from his labours, I would make reference to the fallacy that a slice of fat from a sucking-pig is a cure for fretfulness in infants. A well-to-do tradesman in the City of London, told me that his first-born was a very weakly child at birth, and so fretful, the nurse said it would not live a month. Someone suggested the sucking-pig remedy; but the father scouted the notion. At length, to escape the chatter of the women, he gave his consent for a trial of the "fad," and he assured me, with every appearance of earnestness, that his son's life was saved by the influence of that piece of piglet.

Roasted snails are said to be a certain cure for emaciation in adults; but I have never heard of their efficacy being put to the test. However, the remedy is still quoted—the snails to be used for the purpose being small and black, nine in number, and eaten at the ninth hour on nine successive days in the ninth month of the year. The wonderful properties of this charm being thus available on but nine days in each year.

PRISCIAN PRIM:

A TALE OF THE ISLE OF MAN.

BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the ruin were some workmen's tools and a tall ladder, which had probably been placed there in order that it might be out of the way, and it was by its means that the little monkey had climbed to the top of the tottering wall.

A month or two ago Priscian Prim would have regarded the spectacle as another instance of the singular madness of children, and have passed on, supposing that she could come down by the same way she had gone up; but his notions had lately undergone a great change, which puzzled none more than himself. In fear and trembling, he began to ascend the ladder, the slightest sound

making him shudder at the thought of its alarming Brada; but at last his heart gave a great throb, for he had her safely in his arms.

"Ou's a welly wude man, Mr. Pwiscian Pwim," she informed him, rather indignantly. It was not at all the treatment that a lady expects to receive from a gentleman, for she was tightly screwed up under his left arm, with her little legs about on the level with her head.

"There now," he said, setting her upon the ground, "you may thank your stars and me that there's not a great hole in your head by this time."

"And indeed I's kite squozzen to bits," said th little thing, vainly endeavouring to smoothe down her frock. "I'll just tell nurse it was 'ou who c'umpled me, and she'll give 'ou a good scolding—she will, I tell 'ou. She lets me come out all by my welly own se'f; and—and where's my boofie ferns?"

The piteous quiver in her voice and the darkened eyes were clearly premonitory signs of a thunderstorm; so he hastened to reassure her.

"There, there, Brada," he said soothingly.

"But I tell 'ou it isn't 'dere, dere.'" And she sat down upon the grass and began to sob outright.

Priscian Prim watched her with anxious interest and his hands folded neatly before him. It was very distressing that she should cry like this, but what could he do to stop her tears? With the best intentions, he was always putting his foot in it; at any rate there could be no harm in looking for her ferns. He found them at the bottom of the ladder, and gathering them up, came and sat down beside her, and waited till the storm had passed by.

At first her face was averted from him, but by degrees the little coalscuttle bonnet turned towards him. He seized the opportunity and said—

"Here they are, Brada."

"Ou's such a welly bad man 'ou ought to be shut up in 'our bandbox," she said; but she took the ferns and began to arrange them.

"Brada," he said presently, "when is your sister going to be married?"

"Dis year—next year—sometime—never, I s'pose."

"Hem—I don't understand."

"Ou's welly stoopid, den," she said, with a saucy toss of the head.

"Yes, I know I am, Brada. But is she going to marry Mr. Quirk soon?"

"Mawwy cousin Henwy!" she exclaimed, her blue eyes wide open with astonishment.

He pressed his hand tightly to his heart to stop its wild throbbing, and his face was strangely pale. There was an unusual thickness in his voice as he asked—

"Brada dear, isn't she engaged to him?"

"Of course not."

During the silence that followed the child regarded him curiously, his emotion being so obvious that she forgot all her own troubles and even the ferns upon her lap.

"But on the day he came, he was engaged then?"

"I tink 'ou's welly fond of Mona," was her quiet comment upon this.

"But do please tell me," he pleaded, putting his arm around her little waist and drawing her closer to him in his eagerness. And this, if you please, is that crusty old bachelor, Priscian Prim.

"She was engaged to go wif him to Santon Glen, but dat's all."

Oh! the misery that he had inflicted upon himself by taking the word of that silly old fellow Costain. But this was not the time to blame himself or anybody; he was too overcome by his own feelings. The gloomy shadows of the night were creeping over the earth, but his heart was filled with a new glad light. In his delight, he drew that sweet little face still nearer to him, and said softly—

"Brada, will you kiss me?"

And she put up her ruddy little lips, and he bent down and kissed her. It was a pretty picture in the tree-filled garden, with its old mossy ruins, and the bats flitting to and fro in the dark, and the moon just tingeing the edge of the cloud above with silver.

It was not until nearly ten minutes later that he recollects he was sitting on the damp grass; so you see what a different man Priscian Prim had become. Unfortunately, however, our way of looking at things is apt to change also; and second thoughts are seldom as brimful of pleasure as those that come to us with the first flush of excitement. So long as he was with Brada he was happy, but when he found himself alone in the coffee-room, he began to think more calmly over the altered state of affairs. And then it burst upon him that the failure of all his schemes had put marriage out of the question.

Colonel Mylrea would never dream of allowing his daughter to marry a husband who was little better than a pauper. This last is an unpleasant word to apply to oneself even in thought, but there was no shirking about him, and he did so without flinching. True, the colonel was very unlike the generality of mankind, having many notions at which his friends turned up their noses; but with regard to money, there is a tolerable unanimity among fathers—they are agreed that it is an essential to a son-in-law. It was clear, then, that the colonel was a hopeless obstacle, for Priscian Prim would never willingly have sown dissension between father and daughter.

He felt, too, that it would not be right to ask any girl to abandon comparative luxury for penury; and all the arguments were upon the same side. No. His best plan was to wait and struggle on; perhaps the future might throw up some lucrative flotsam and jetsam, and he could come forward boldly, and ask Mona to be his wife. But this plan had one decided disadvantage, and he had already made so many mistakes that he was obliged to be cautious. If he were to go away without giving her some intimation of his feelings towards her, she would naturally conclude that he did not care about her, and would endeavour to forget him. This had to be avoided. He decided to leave the hotel next day, and to write a letter of explanation to Mona, and another to the colonel; and then—

"Miss Mylrea," was suddenly whispered into his ear. Of course, the speaker was that silent old mummy Costain.

"Good gracious, Costain! I wish you would wear boots or make a noise, or do things like other people," said that staid old fellow Priscian Prim. "You nearly frightened me out of my wits. Have you been drinking again?"

"I'm teetotal, sir," said Costain sadly.

"Then what's the matter with Miss Mylrea?"

"She's lost."

"Lost!—lost where?"

"That's what the colonel wants to know."

"Really, you're a most irritating man. How does the colonel know she's lost?"

"She hasn't come in to dinner," answered Costain, shaking his head gloomily.

"Oh, that's all!" exclaimed Priscian Prim, who a few weeks back would have been alarmed for his life had his dinner been ten minutes late.

But in spite of his apparent unconcern and his late resolution not to meet her again for the present, he went into the garden to look for her, and as she was not there, he hunted about the grounds. There were so many ways of reaching the hotel, that while he was searching in one direction she was probably entering the house by another; still it was pleasant to feel that he was doing something for her sake, even though that something should be quite unnecessary—so little did he think of trouble now-a-days. He inquired at the mill whether anything had been seen of Miss Mylrea, and they thought that she had crossed the bridge and walked towards the hotel some ten minutes before. Strolling slowly back, he noticed that there was a light in her room, which had previously been dark; and satisfied on this point, he made up his mind to go as far as Ronaldsway, and bid a last farewell to his unfortunate mine.

As he passed through Ballasalla he met several wagonettes filled with excursionists and some bare-legged children running alongside singing Manx ballads; and he stopped to watch them with quite a novel interest. Perhaps, after all, there might be some faint glimmering of sense in those young urchins, though it was hard to see. A copper fell in the roadway, and was instantly buried under a struggling mass of legs and arms. Ah, yes! their sense was clear enough now, even if the picture might easily have been much brighter. Priscian Prim heaved a deep sigh as he walked on again. Money, money, money—that was his curse too.

The evening was dark for the time of year, the breeze having swept up the black clouds from the sea until they hung overhead like a pall which rested on the tops of the mountains, and showed, as it were, festoons of blue sky. But over the sea they were torn into long interlacing strips, and the sad-faced moon was floating among them, now diving into darkness and now letting fall a flood of silvery light upon mountain and moorland, cornfield and meadow, rock-bound coast, and sleeping sea. In the glisten of the tideway beyond Langness a brig, with all her canvas set, was beating up towards Douglas; otherwise not a moving thing was in sight. The long, straight narrow lane was almost as silent as the grave; not a twitter of a bird in the hedge-rows; not a chirp of a grasshopper; only the breeze rustling along, with a faint, distant murmur of the sea.

But Priscian Prim liked the solitude, and was too absorbed in his own thoughts to notice the silence; and it was only when he heard the sound of footsteps coming rapidly towards him that he looked up from the ground. Surely he knew that great, brawny figure in sou'-wester, kneeboots, and blue guernsey. Without doubt it was Matthew Cosnahan, the master of the *Fairy Queen*. What on earth could have happened to make the man run at that pace?

"You seem to be in a hurry, Cosnahan," said Priscian Prim. "Why, you're blowing like a grampus."

"An' sure it would ha' been no wonder had I left my bones on the beach," gasped the fisherman, who was evidently in a state of great excitement.

"You haven't done so, I hope?"

"Well, no, Master Prim; but it's bewitched the place is."

"What place?"

"I'm not sure o' that, for I never stopped to look; but likely enough it's the whole of it. There's such a howlin' and squealin' as you never heard in all your born days, Master Prim; the noise is somethin' dreadful. It's the witches that are about for sartin sure."

"This is strange news, Cosnahan," said Priscian Prim. "Would you mind telling me a little more exactly what you heard, for I'm going that way."

"Aw, but it's not so aisy to be exact when the moon's peepin' at you one minute and bobbin' away the next. I was stan'in' near the end of the lane, lookin' at the brig yonder—for I don't think she'll make Douglas to-night with the wind as it is at all—and of a sudden I heard a great squeal comin' from Santon way, and then another from Ronaldsway; and maybe about half a minute later I heard two more, and then I just came away as fast as my legs would carry me, for there are some nasty tales about that part, Master Prim."

"Are you sure it wasn't a wreck?"

"An' how could it be a wreck in two places at once?" indignantly demanded Cosnahan with some show of reason.

"You must have been mistaken."

"Aw, but I'm not given that way," said the old fellow, with a resolute shake of the head.

"Well, good-night, Cosnahan. Perhaps I shall be able to find out what it is."

"I wouldn't advise you to go near it at all, Master Prim."

But Priscian Prim merely laughed, and continued his walk.

CHAPTER VII.

EXCEPT for the gentle plash of the wavelets upon the beach, all was so silent when Priscian Prim arrived at the end of the lane that he was inclined to think the old fisherman's imagination had played him a foolish trick. The Manx were a singularly superstitious race, with weird legends of "hairy satyrs" and man-eating giants, and prodigious fairies on the land and beautiful mermaids in the sea; and as several notable battles had been fought at Ronaldsway, the place was

naturally crowded with ghosts. This was quite enough to account for Cosnahan's alarm.

It is a low bleak cheerless coast for a mile or more; but towards the north it rises into bluff headlands, covered with grass to their very edges. In some of those grand caverns Priscian Prim could hear the sobs of the sea; but no other sound. Yet hush! what was that? A loud cry for help; and, before he had time to start off in that direction, another came from a wholly different quarter.

He hurried on to the beach and started towards Ronaldsway; and five minutes later he heard the cry again—only once this time and behind him. Had he been a nervous man, he certainly would have been rather startled at this, but being far too matter-of-fact to believe in any superstitions nonsense, he turned and made for his deserted shaft. There—there it is again, and immediately afterwards repeated. But instead of being frightened, he broke out into a gruff laugh, for he remembered that the place was noted for a very remarkable echo, proceeding from the farmhouse.

When he reached the mouth of the shaft, he saw that the rotten boarding had disappeared, and a voice came out of the darkness and said—

"Please, will you help me out, I've fallen into this horrid hole."

The shock was so sudden that he fell upon his knees and peered down, one word only escaping from his lips, "Mona!"

"Oh, Mr. Prim, is that you? I'm so glad. I've been here for hours and hours, and thought I never should get out, for I can't quite reach the top."

"But you're not hurt?" he inquired eagerly.

"Not a bit," she answered cheerfully, "only there's lots of water down here."

"Then you've got your feet wet," said Priscian Prim solemnly. You see "the old Adam" would crop up every now and again.

She went into a merry peal of laughter, though few girls would have felt very mirthful in a position and after such an adventure, but Mona was a soldier's daughter.

"And you're not frightened?" he asked with admiration.

"I was afraid I should never get out, for though I was calling out about every five minutes, nobody seemed to hear me. I suppose this is your mine, Mr. Prim. While I was wandering about on the beach, I saw it, and no sooner had I stepped upon the boards than they gave way and I fell down. But won't you help me out?"

She looked sweetly pretty, with the moonlight streaming down upon her upturned pleading face, and her amber hair and her arms stretched up towards him. The man's heart would have been of adamant had it not been deeply moved. He bent forward until he grasped her hands, and then stopped suddenly. She could feel that he was trembling.

"I hope you won't be offended at what I said," he began.

"Offended!"

"Yes. I called you Mona."

"Indeed." Her face was bent down now.

"It was very wrong of me, but the word slipped out unawares; and do you know, I should like to do it again, if I might." Surely the man had more regard for "the fitness of things" than to

propose at such a time as this, and after his excellent resolutions, too.

She made him no answer. So he went on : " It was all a miserable mistake. I thought you were engaged to Mr. Quirk, who turns out to be your cousin, and now I feel so happy."

" But you mightn't feel so happy if you were standing in the water down here," she said, with a sly glance at him.

" Oh, yes, I should if I knew that you loved me as well as I love you."

There, he had done it now, this singular old bachelor, Priscian Prim ! This poverty-stricken fellow had cast all his good intentions to the wind and felt ready to defy a whole regiment of infuriated colonels. But his simplicity had caused him to make a curious mistake—he had forgotten to put any question ; and though he waited and waited, of course he got no answer.

" Do you, Mona ? " he asked at last.

" How can I tell ? "

" Well, do you like me a little ? "

There came up to him a faint whisper of " yes," that made his heart beat as it had never done before.

" Enough to marry me, Mona ? " he continued.

Another " yes," almost a sigh this time.

He was so excited that he almost began with a cheer, as he said : " If my mine has not produced coal, it has given me the most precious pearl in the whole wide world." And setting his feet firmly against the rock, he took a stronger hold of her hands and drew her up to him and gave her his first kiss. And so this strange wooing came to an end.

As Mona had been down in the dismal shaft quite two hours, and had left the hotel early in the afternoon, she was very anxious to get back ; so that the walk through the lane was performed with much greater rapidity than her companion liked. Indeed he was so supremely happy that he told her he would gladly have knelt for months on the wet rocks if only her sweet face was as close to his as it had been, but in this statement, I think, he deviated from the strict truth for which he had always expressed so much regard.

At the Abbey, they found everybody in a state of the wildest excitement ; suggestions that would have been treated with scornful ridicule at most times, meeting with considerable favour. Some proposed to drag the Silverburn, though its utmost depth beneath the falls would not have exceeded three feet and its ordinary depth three inches ; others ventured to hint that Mona might have been run over on the railway—wholly oblivious of the fact that a train usually pulls up for a sheep ; and Costain surmised in a sepulchral whisper that Mona and Priscian Prim had eloped together—which, as it happened, was far more probable.

Great were the rejoicings when they made their appearance, and it was all they could do to answer the shower of eager questions that assailed them on every side. However, they managed to explain matters satisfactorily ; and Mona, hearing that her father had just returned to his own room, slipped away to meet him alone. Had Priscian Prim chosen, he might easily have become one of the objects of interest in the neighbourhood, but being a steady-going old fellow without any wish to be a hero, he was rather annoyed at

the curious group that followed him about everywhere. At last, he sought refuge in the coffee-room, which was untenanted, and sat down to review the position of affairs.

Bob Acres discovered that courage has a disagreeable way of oozing through the palms of the hands ; and Priscian Prim, who, as in his screw propeller, had shown a knack of rediscovering old things, now made the same discovery. Upon the brink of the shaft, with Mona's blue eyes looking into his, he had told himself that he had no fear of a regiment of angry colonels ; but sitting alone in the arm-chair, he was obliged to confess that he had been altogether too daring. In fact, the coming encounter with a single angry colonel began to wear a very ugly aspect. Suppose this hot-headed old soldier should say that he, a penniless adventurer, had entrapped his one ewe-lamb into a pit from which she could not escape, and had then made her promise to marry him ! The colonel was so original in his ways that he might have none of our insular prejudices against personal violence. What was the best thing to do under these unpleasant circumstances ? He began to map out a neat little conversation in which question and answer dove-tailed most beautifully, when his reflections were suddenly interrupted by a deep whisper of—

" The colonel, sir."

Priscian Prim leaped into the air like a jack-in-the-box ; but on looking round he saw only Costain with a look of surprise on his leathery face.

" Look here, Costain," he said indignantly, resuming his seat, " you'll have to be put in a glass-case, so that you can't go creeping about and frightening people in this disgusting way."

" I'll try and mend, sir," said Costain penitently.

" Do ! And if you can't make some sound with your feet, tie a bell round your neck."

Costain actually smiled ; at any rate his long face broadened out a bit and a few of the wrinkles ran together. But he only said a second time—

" The colonel, sir."

" So you said before."

" He's over-excited, sir."

" Over-excited !" exclaimed Priscian Prim in alarm. Were his worst suspicions about to be verified ?

" But he sends his compliments to you—"

" Come, that's better," thought Priscian Prim.

" And thanks you warmly for having saved his daughter's life, and he hopes to be able to express his gratitude personally in the morning."

Priscian Prim wore a smiling face now.

" There's half-a-crown for you, Costain," he said ; and the man departed with a curious twitching of the left eyelid.

Here then, perhaps, was the way out of his difficulties. Gratitude is a heavy enough roller to smooth even a rougher road than lay before him ; and if only Mona would consent to wait and he could find some profitable employment, all might yet be well. He went to bed with a lighter heart than for many a long day ; and his dreams, though pleasant, were certainly not such as are supposed to crowd round the pillow of a confirmed old bachelor.

Next morning, shortly after breakfast, he had his interview with the colonel. After briefly stating what had happened on the previous even-

ing, he explained his own circumstances, sparing himself in nothing, however painful it might be to his own feelings. It was ignominious, and perhaps unnecessary, to mention that during his ten years legal experience he had had only one client, whom he had kicked out of his office; but nevertheless he did so, and the colonel merely smiled. The screw-propeller was an unfortunate fiasco, showing a glimpse of his character, though having no bearing upon his future; yet he bravely told all about it, and even dwelt with some fondness upon its principle and structure. The colonel frowned at this. But perhaps his hardest task, after telling about his poor mother, was the laying bare his disastrous folly in the case of his mine, for it was patent to even his own dim eyes. However, he got through it at last, with his face turned towards the ground and not venturing to glance at the colonel.

A short, awkward silence followed, during which the colonel examined him through his *prince-nez* with uncomfortable minuteness. At last he said:

"Mr. Prim, I'll tell you what it is, you're a duffer—a positive duffer. Now I'm not going to cry over spilt milk—I leave that to women and children; but I'd like to know what right you had to go messing about with screw-propellers, and mines and rubbish. Apelles advised the cobbler to stick to his last, and his advice is as good to-day as it was then. You had no clients, you say: but you should have made them—you would have done, only you hated your profession. Well, well! Davy mixed his paints 'with brains:' if he had been without them, he would have been dabbing doors and window-frames all his life, instead of painting masterpieces. Brains! why, you haven't got any more than this walking-stick;" and he held it out for poor Priscian Prim's inspection.

So long as there had been a particle of hope, the latter had been very meek and submissive, but now that he felt his case to be quite desperate; he sat more upright in his chair, and prepared to strike hard in his own defence. The pleasant little conversation that he had put together with such care on the previous night had fallen to pieces like a puzzle map, and he was unable to fit in the smallest fragment of it. Indeed, his flushed face showed that he was getting angry.

The colonel, noticing the change, went on more kindly: "I hope you're not offended, for I like to say what I have to say, and have done with it. Like Brutus, I'm 'a plain blunt man, that love my friend,' and also know my friends, which is more difficult. Let me tell you frankly that I like you—I admire your courage and energy, and I think that you will make a good husband. Now you are fond of Mona, and she tells me she is fond of you: so the question is—what can I do to help you?"

There was a strange mist over Priscian Prim's eyes and a great lump in his throat. He tried to speak, but could not; so in silence he grasped the colonel's hand and shook it warmly. Nor was the old man less moved, for the parting with his daughter would be a terrible wrench; but after a pause, he continued:—

"One thing is clear enough—you must give up the law for which you are unsuited. I should think that, with your steady determination, you would make a capital farmer, if only you'll go

through a course of practical instruction. If you like this idea, I have a pretty little farm with an excellent house which I can put at your disposal; and then you might capitalize your own income and employ it in buying stock, and I daresay I could help you with a spare thousand or two now, and more by-and-by. It won't be robbing me, for it would be Mona's dowry; so you need have no scruples on that score."

Priscian Prim thought the colonel the grandest old fellow that the world had ever seen; and I am quite sure that he might have found many a worse father-in-law. The suggested plan was discussed at considerable length and eventually agreed upon.

"I detest long engagements," said the colonel in conclusion; "they are a nuisance to everybody; so the sooner you get married the better pleased I shall be. But we'll have no fuss and ladies'-school nonsense at the wedding—merely a quiet little family party."

It was wonderful how nicely the colonel's peculiarities fitted in with Priscian Prim's views—the bridegroom elect was radiant with delight, feeling that at last he had met a congenial spirit. He dashed out of the room, like a schoolboy, greeted Mona in a most unmannerly fashion, dragged her off to the Abbey to talk over their plans, chased Brada among the raspberry bushes, and generally behaved as no sober fellow outside of Bedlam would dream of behaving. Somehow or other, he seemed to have got hold of Time by the forelock, and to be leading him backward down the hill again—he looked a good ten years younger.

He really did become one of the objects of interest in the neighbourhood now; such a wonderful transformation astounded those who knew him, and they all came to look at him. Costain's method of congratulation was original. He crept up to Priscian Prim and murmured—

"Sir."

"Hullo!" exclaimed Priscian Prim, who now thought it right to use all manner of jovial expressions.

"Your servant," said Costain, saluting and then standing at attention.

"So you shall be," said Priscian Prim gaily; and engaged the silent old mummy on the spot. He is now general factotum at Daisy Farm, and likely to live for ever. I wonder how he does it.

Upon Priscian Prim's married life, it is unnecessary to dwell. He is quite a giddy young butterfly compared with the sleepy old chrysalis that he was. He has taken to wearing his hat on one side, a short dandy stick, and a horribly swaggering walk; but in spite of this eruption of dissipated habits, he is generally conceded to be one of the best and most successful farmers on the North side of the Island, though of course his less fortunate rivals say that he owes this entirely to the colonel's money. Perhaps so. Anyhow, it is quite clear that the colonel's daughter has the whip-hand over him; for she has hidden away all his songs, so that he can never sing now. Would that other wives were as thoughtful!

One thing more. If ever you go to the Isle of Man and will pay a visit to Daisy Farm, I am sure that you will meet the warmest heartiest welcome from Mona and her husband, who used to be that singular old bachelor, Priscian Prim.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HAWKINS.

BY JAMES HUTTON.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM HAWKINS belonged to a family of voyagers with a tendency towards buccaneering. He himself was just a little too late to take full advantage of the "spacious times" of Queen Elizabeth, but the spirit of adventurous enterprise had not yet died out under the depressing influence of the first of the Stuarts. The restlessness of the age drove Captain Hawkins to the Eastern seas, and about the year 1608 we find him attached to the Court of the Great Moghul, under the title of the English Khan, or lord. His experiences were startling even at a period when "blood-guiltiness" was little thought of in any region of the globe. A ratiue nobleman, his personal friend, had charge of the royal wardrobe and china closet. In the course of one of the King's progresses, a camel chanced to get a bad fall, by which his burden came to grief. Among its contents was a china dish, actually worth about ninety rupees, but which his Majesty greatly admired. The unfortunate nobleman lost no time in sending off a trustworthy agent to China to purchase a dish that should exactly match the broken article. At the expiration of two years, however, he had not returned, and, as ill-luck would have it, the King then be-thought him for the first time of his favourite piece of chinaware, and commanded that it should be brought to him. In vain did the trembling courtier protest his entire innocence with regard to the mishap. In vain did he relate the steps he had taken to procure a new dish. In vain did he pray for yet a little time. The King was inexorable. The unhappy man received in the Royal presence 120 lashes, inflicted with two heavy whips made of cords. He was then beaten by the hall-porters with thin short cudgels till he became unconscious, when he was dragged out by the heels and thrown into prison. Next day his Majesty asked if he were yet dead, and on being told that there was still some life in him, condemned him to perpetual imprisonment. One of the King's sons, however, interceded for the poor wretch, and obtained his discharge. In about two months' time he had recovered sufficiently to make his appearance in durbar, to return thanks for the extraordinary leniency with which he had been treated. Jehangir, such was the name of the Great Moghul, received him graciously, but bade him depart immediately for China, and bring him thence a new dish to replace the other. A sum of 5,000 rupees was assigned for his travelling expenses, and one-fourth of his former salary was restored to him. After he had been absent some fourteen months, a message arrived from the Shah of Persia, to the effect that he possessed the only counterpart to the broken dish, and that he would send it to save the nobleman from further misery.

At another time a Pathan, or Afghan, warrior offered his services to Parwiz Khan, a drunken son of Jehangir, for the modest sum of one thousand rupees a day. Being asked what he proposed to do in return for such enormous pay, he replied that he was so strong and valiant that no man durst stand up against him. The Prince smiled, and took the swashbuckler with him to the

palace, and repeated what the Pathan had said. Just then an immense lion, newly captured and bound with ropes, was dragged into the outer court. The King bade the man fight the brute, but he naturally declined to do so, unless furnished with arms. These were refused, and he was forced to attack the monster as he was. After a while "the lyon, being loose from his keepers but not from his chaines, got the poore man within his clawes, and tore his body in many parts; and with his pawes tore the one halfe of his face, so that this valiant man was killed by this wilde beast." Jehangir's bloodthirstiness was not to be so easily appeased. He summoned ten of his horsemen who were on guard, and made them one after the other, "buffet and wrestle" with the lion. In the end, three were killed outright, and seven badly injured.

Jehangir was terribly severe. Eight of his captains, through cowardice or negligence, had suffered the city of Patna to be surprised by the rebels. A more mighty man of valour, however, recovered the town, and captured the runaway officers, whom he sent in chains to Agra. They were sentenced, unheard, to have their heads and chins closely shaven, to be dressed in women's apparel, to be placed on asses with their face to the tail and so led through the streets, to be scourged under the King's own eyes, and then to be thrown into prison. On one occasion he asked his youngest son, Sultan Shakryar, then seven years of age, if he would ride with him on his elephant. The child respectfully answered that he would go, or stay where he was, as his father thought proper. Jehangir expected him to say that with all his heart he would wait upon his father, and was so displeased with his reply that he slapped his face and boxed his ears sharply. The child, however, shed no tears nor uttered a cry. Jehangir asked what was the meaning of this sullenness. The little fellow replied that he had been taught that it was shameful for a prince to cry, and therefore he would not do so whatever was done to him. Then the King called for a bodkin, and ran it through Shakryar's cheeks. The blood poured profusely from the wounds, but the boy remained impassive, and the bystanders wondered alike at the father's cruelty and the son's courage.

In this manner did Jehangir pass his time. He rose with the sun, and turning to the westward, in the direction of Mecca, he counted his beads, of which he had eight chains, each strung with 400 beads, so that he was forced to utter 3,200 words, and he was an unbeliever in any religion. That rite being fulfilled, he showed himself to his people, chatting with his courtiers. After that he slept for two hours, partook of an early meal, and visited his women. At noon he again appeared in public and passed the next three hours in witnessing boxing and wrestling matches, and combats of wild animals with one another, or with men armed with sword or spear. At three o'clock the nobles flocked to the darbar. In the open space in the middle, facing the throne, stood the "Sheriff" and his forty executioners, distinguished by a quilted cap of a particular make. Some of them carried a sharp axe over their shoulder, others held in their hands various kinds of whips. The durbar usually lasted two hours, at the end of which the King retired to his religious exercises!

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

FOUND DROWNED.

BY RITSON STEWART.



CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDGE AND ITS VICTIMS.

THE little town of Scardale Green had long enjoyed a reputation for peacefulness and beauty. The inhabitants of the valley round it were of an agricultural race; their fathers and grandfathers had worked on the land and tended the flocks before them; they were industrious, frugal, and independent, of a most pleasant disposition, courteous to the stranger, and helpful to one another. And the character of the hills immediately around the little town matched that of its inhabitants. They were peaceful and pleasant, in spite of some ruggedness and want of culture. They had lured no traveller to a sudden death, they had betrayed no friend to a tragic fate. The precipices in their hollows were guiltless of murder; even the snow-storms which visited them had never taken a human life.

In all respects the Vale of Scardale, pre-eminently among mountain valleys, had enjoyed a cheerful immunity from tragic associations. The angler who wandered along its pleasant becks, the tourist who scaled its mountain walls, the young people who—in its brief season of busy life—boated on the waters of its lake, all followed their chosen pastime with a cheerful sense of safety, feeling that assurance of the impossibility of accident which comes from the knowledge that no accident has ever befallen any one else in the same situation.

Therefore it was that, when at last the valley shared the fate of other earthly paradises, and opened its gates to tragic disaster, and that disaster not unattended by circumstances of a mysterious and inexplicable nature, there was all the more excitement and consternation created in the

neighbourhood by the unfortunate events which followed one another in rapid succession.

There were not wanting some in the adjoining valleys of Lonedale and Eskmere to speak of these events as a visitation of Providence on the men of Scardale for their foolish pride in the proverbial good fortune of the valley. But this opinion could not be regarded as without bias, nor altogether free from jealous satisfaction, because the distant heights of Lonedale had been notorious for their hidden dangers to mountain climbers, and even the sylvan vale of Eskmere was not free from the doubtful glory reflected upon its lonelier recesses by the tragic fate of certain of its inhabitants in bygone times. Besides, this ill-natured opinion was only expressed by the more idle and talkative among the women, who had not much opportunity for the exercise of their inventive and fault-finding faculties, and who were therefore obliged to make the most use of what opportunity they had.

It was in the stir of talk following the first three of those "accidents" which afterwards made Scardale so notorious, that I visited the place, and took up my abode for a time there.

I was attracted, as other artists had been before me, by the beauty of the scenery, and I went at the end of the sketching season, resolved—as the little town was a convenient place for a somewhat lengthened residence, and also admirably situated in the midst of a picturesque country—to spend the winter there.

It seemed to me, uninstructed as I was in the habitual character of the place, that a good deal of fuss was being made over one or two accidental deaths, and these of a sort most likely to occur in a country place, where water was abundant, and floods were frequent. It was pointed out to me, however, as a singular circumstance, that no case of drowning had before occurred in the valley within the memory of its "oldest inhabitant," and that three separate cases had recently happened, all within the space of a few months, and all at the same place, or very near it.

"It must be the bridge that's at fault," I re-

marked, "you say they all occurred at Meadow Bridge. Very well, then, it's clear the place wants repairing, railing in, or something."

But this argument would not stand against the further information that was given to me. Railings had been put (directly after the first catastrophe) to protect the foot-path where it approached the stream; the bridge itself was in perfect repair and well walled on each side, yet accidents continued to happen there. I visited the place myself, and acknowledged that it seemed safe enough, a far safer passage over the river Raven than the stepping-stones higher up, which were frequently used by the townspeople, young and old, and yet were never the cause of any accident. It must then be a mere coincidence that three persons should chance to have been drowned at this one spot within a short space of time.

Nevertheless, the place began to have a reputation as a dangerous place; the townspeople avoided it after dark, and their children were forbidden to play near it.

"I wonder, sir, that old Matthew Gibson likes living so near the place; with his little Dolly so young," remarked my good landlady to me, "but he's old, and not likely to change now."

"Where does he live?" I asked, not having learnt yet that, although a stranger born, I was expected to have an intuitive knowledge of the old inhabitants of the dales, and an intimate acquaintance with the situations of their residences.

"In the cottage at the other side of the bridge; you must have seen it, sir," replied Mrs. Timson, in some surprise.

"Yes, I know it: a nice-looking girl lives there; I got her to give me a glass of milk the other day, when I was sketching near."

"That'll be Mary, sir, Matthew's grand-daughter. She goes out sewing a good deal, but less now than she used to. Matthew's getting old, and there's the child to attend to, as well. But I was saying, sir, that it would be a loss if Matthew did move away; for he's kept his eye on the bridge a good deal since these accidents happened, and warned the little ones off it—boys is so fond of running into danger—and strangers too, when the water is high, and washing the path. Only last week he came to meet me as I went over in the dusk, and carried my bundle for me. 'Why, Mrs. Timson,' he said, 'you ought to know better, the mother of a family, and some of them toddling yet, to come over a bridge with an ill name like this so near dark.' I said as I should be sorry to think any bridge in Scardale had an ill name. But it was thoughtful of him all the same. He is a good man and kind to his neighbours is Matthew, and always has been; though he has seen plenty of trouble."

What the trouble was that old Matthew had seen Mrs. Timson did not specify to me at this time, and I had not curiosity enough to inquire. Nevertheless I was aroused to take some interest in the disasters of Meadow Bridge, and—in quite a different way—I soon came to be interested in Matthew Gibson also.

I had already taken a survey of Meadow Bridge, and I decided that it would make a suitable subject for a sketch. It was a mere foot-way connecting the high-road running under Ravenscar with the field-path crossing from the town. It consisted of a simple and narrow arch, unflattened at the

top, so that the passenger crossing it walked over a curve, like the men on the bridge in the willow-patterned china. It was roughly but strongly walled in at each side, and wooden railings had recently been placed along the banks of the stream for some yards on both sides of its entrance.

It was prettily situated. Ravenscar rose steeply behind old Matthew's cottage on the other side of the high road, with a little rill tumbling and leaping through the garden. On the other side, meadows stretched away towards the town, their grassy level broken everywhere by rocky knolls crowned with clusters of trees, and mouldy with moss. Two other streams came hurrying across the valley at this point to join the river Raven; one of them—Hause Beck—was also crossed by a foot-bridge a few yards away, and immediately in front of this second bridge was a pretty little tumbling fall. All round in every direction but one, the great hills stood, with farther peaks withdrawn into the solitude of valleys, valleys which offered long vistas of ever increasing loneliness and height. The woods which embraced the lower limbs of the mountain giants kept a ruddy colour even throughout the long winter, and formed a splendid fore-ground to the shining snow which visited the barren summits early and lingered there late.

The river itself was a shallow stream in dry weather; after heavy rain or melting snows it was a strong and rapid torrent, drowning the trees which bent to caress it, filling its deep and well-enclosed channel to overflowing, and spreading itself over the lower fields on its banks.

Nevertheless it was not a place suggestive of danger or tragedy. The village babies had long toddled over the bridge without accident; it had even been the regular road to school for some little children, who were now forbidden by their mothers to go that way. Even when the river was flooded and the neighbouring banks under water, nothing worse could happen to a careful wayfarer than to be compelled to wade from one foot-bridge to another in water ankle-deep. The path was here so well protected by railings, and the bridge so good, that no danger could come to an ordinarily heedful person from the torrents rushing so near

him.

The first accident which happened was of such a natural sort that nothing about it, except its novelty, could have excited surprise. The only drunkard of the town, a man of dissipated reputation, Timothy Wake by name, who was reported to have once lived in a manufacturing town and there to have contracted the vices of excessive civilization, had been reeling home one Saturday night to his cottage on Ravenscar, when he lost his way, missed his footing, and plunged into the river below the bridge. This at least was supposed to have been his fate, for he had been last seen near the bridge, and his body was found the morning afterwards lower down the stream.

There was nothing in this accident which could excite the wonder of any one; there was even a sort of moral fitness in it; it contained a wholesome flavour of warning to the backslider, and it assisted materially the production of the district sermons for several weeks afterwards.

But when the valley idiot met with the same fate as the valley drunkard, the lesson meant to be conveyed was less apparent. It was true that

misfortune overtook him one Sabbath morning when other people were at church, and when no creature with full allowance of sense could have managed to drown himself in the unflooded river; but then it was not the poor young man's fault that he had not been in safe attendance at divine service with his family and the majority of the dalesmen; he could not control his movements sufficiently to make him a fit attendant at any public meeting; and he was permitted to wander freely through the valley on Sunday as on other days. He was gentle and harmless, though quite imbecile. He could not walk steadily, but reeled and lurched strangely along the roads; nevertheless, he rarely fell, and he guided himself cleverly across places more difficult and dangerous than Meadow Bridge. How he came to fall into the river was not known; he was seen struggling in the water by old Matthew, who, not feeling very well, had been left at home by his grand-daughter when she took her little sister to church. Matthew was unable to give assistance himself, but he hurried downstream to the nearest house and there got help. Poor Jim Dixon was got out of the water half a mile lower, but life was already extinct, and he could never tell how he met his fate.

This second death caused considerable sensation. The people trooping out of the church in the meadows near heard the dismal tale, and crowded to listen to old Matthew's description of the catastrophe.

He had gone to the bridge, so he said, to see if the people were coming out of church, and he saw Jim Dixon struggling in the river. He shouted for help, and ran down to Thomas Lee's; and there the lad was got out of the water without difficulty, but he was quite dead. "Stone dead," the old man said, shaking his head solemnly.

Little Dolly—his grand-daughter—stood staring at him all the time with open eyes, full of that horror, mingled with interest, which is aroused in the mind of a young child by the history of thrilling and dreadful circumstances; until some one said—

"Take the child away, it's not fit hearing for a little one like her."

Then Mary begged her grandfather to come in also and to talk of it no more; but he seemed strangely fascinated by the event and his share in it; he repeated his story over and over again, almost in the same words each time.

Mrs. Timson told me all this, after mentioning that the accidents seemed to have had a morbid effect on the old man's mind, so that he would be "better away."

"Mary wants him to go, but he's grown to the place and won't stir. It would be better for Dolly, too, if he'd go; she hears too much talking of such things. Some one is always dropping in there and beginning it all again; and the old man's always ready with his 'It were Sabbath morning, and I'd just had my bit of a pipe'—why, you must have met him yourself, sir, and heard him tell it."

The death of Jim Dixon was soon followed by another. Some of the boys of the town had employed their Saturday afternoon in fishing in the river. They ended in the dusk of the evening—the river then running very high and fast—at Meadow Bridge, and one of them, Davy Miller

by name, lingered near it to have a last throw. Three other boys, loitering across the field townwards, heard a sudden scream behind them, and ran back. They were just in time to see their comrade throw up his arms wildly, as the swift current bore him away. When they had passed before, old Matthew had been trimming his garden hedge on the other side of the road. Now he was hurrying towards them, attracted apparently by the scream.

"What is it, boys? Is there any one in?" he asked.

Little Dolly stood staring in her round-eyed manner over the low wall of the road, and called out—

"Davy Miller go drown. Naughty Davy Miller go drown!"

This saying of Dolly's—repeated by the boys—made Mrs. Timson and other wise matrons say that the child would be better away from a place which had such associations; a place where she was learning—having no mother to see after her, and Mary but young and the old man getting soft with age—almost to look on these dreadful accidents as a kind of play.

"And Matthew's too near the grave himself to think very much of other folk going there a bit before their time; it's like as if he doesn't take it in properly, though a better hearted man, nor one kinder to his neighbours, never lived. But it's no play to Mary, poor girl. She'd give anything to get away from the place, and yet it's like as if she can never bear to leave it, even to come into the town to do her bits of shopping. She's very near given up going out to sew, and will have it to do at home instead; and she sits at that little window all day looking at the Bridge. She can never bear to have Dolly out of her sight, and no wonder, after all that's happened. But she's most uneasy about the old man, who will keep tottering about his garden, not being fit for much else. He's main good at warning careless folk and strangers to mind about the place; but he's no sense of danger himself, and Mary thinks—and she's quite right—that he's as like to fall in as anybody else."

Such was the state of affairs when I made my first sketch at Meadow Bridge, and began my acquaintance with the family living there.

CHAPTER II.

THE COTTAGE UNDER RAVENSCAR.

THE river was low when I made my first sketch. I found a good place for my purpose on the pebble bank by the side of the water, encamped myself there on my stool, made my pencil outlines, and put in my first wash.

The landscape had been destitute of figures when I arrived; the old man—as yet unknown to me—was not "pottering about" his garden; Mary might be at her upper window, but if so she kept herself well out of sight. Very soon, however, the garden-gate clicked, and the small figure of a child, sturdy, toddling, and exceedingly short in proportion to her width, began to cross the road slowly. She was a picturesque little person, with a scarlet plaid shawl pinned over her head, and she held

HOME CHIMES.

both hands behind her, dragging at a little cart, which had evidently been made by amateur hands, but was strongly built, and bore the trace of very laborious workmanship.

A roughly hewn bit of wood with a rag tied round it occupied the cart, and evidently did duty for a doll. Its owner was exceedingly indifferent to its comfort; she had put a heavy stone on its unfashionable petticoats, to keep it from being jolted out of its conveyance; but its head wobbled up and down as she dragged it over stones and ruts without looking behind, and its body was jerked forward, sideways, and backwards, in a manner which would have been, to a sensitive child, painfully suggestive of dislocation, or something equivalent to that, in the baby mind. I was at once struck by a certain infantile brutality in the manner of the otherwise charming human Dolly. When she dragged her wooden namesake over the little hill of the arched bridge, indifferent to the fate of its head against the stone walls, and then stood staring fixedly at me—a purpose for which she had evidently travelled thus far—I suspected her of studying me as a probable future victim of the river, whose death might provide some pleasant excitement on a dull Saturday afternoon.

She answered me with affability, however, when I spoke to her, and proved herself—by a susceptibility to lollipops—to be a strictly human child, and no dark changeling, no witch-like associate of the greedy and mysterious Raven river—well named so—which flowed ever by her door.

I have always found lollipops a useful, nay a necessary, part of my sketching equipment when in the country. This simple medium of exchange—recognizable, without any regal stamp, by the most untutored minds—has secured to me many admirable landscape figures. The shrimp boy on the shore, and the wood-gatherer in sequestered valleys, alike yield to its charm, and are drawn by its witchery into the magic circle of art. I made use of it on this occasion, with satisfactory effect, and thus Dolly and I struck up a kind of friendship; I mean Dolly the human, of course, for Dolly the wooden remained very much out in the cold, tumbled sideways from the cart, with its head against a damp stone, where it wondered doubtless at the hardness of the world. The insensibility of its owner shocked me somewhat, and I felt relieved when a friendly calf came near and gave it a lick, casual but comforting.

It was a few days after this—the days having been too wet and stormy for out-door sketching—that I went into a shop to buy myself a new macintosh. An old man was there, also buying a macintosh, but one of a smaller sort; he had a number spread before him, and he was turning them over, shaking them and feeling at them with careful anxiety. It was a child's macintosh that he desired to purchase, and I could not but feel interested and sympathetic as I watched his fingers, slightly trembling, running over the garments, and his face, pockered with earnestness, studying them carefully. It was touching to see this old man doing a woman's work, and, near the end of his own life, giving so much care and thought to the comfort of one who was evidently only beginning hers. He was apparently a country man, and poor, though decently dressed, and the macintosh seemed to me rather an article of

luxury for any child who could be a member of his family. He had the money to pay for it, however; he counted it out of his trouser's pocket, and walked off with his parcel in silent satisfaction. The shopwoman had served him with a mixture of respect and sympathy. She now remarked, "He's a good old man that, sir, but he does spoil his grand-daughter above a bit. He thinks nothing too good for her to have, and yet he'll hardly spend a penny on his own clothes. 'I'm near the grave,' he'll say sometimes, 'and the rheumatics can't get at me there; but my little one's a long journey to go afore she reaches hers;' and he's right enough, sir, in a way; but I can't see, after all, as the young ones should have all and the old ones nothing. It's a poor look-out, that, sir, for' folks like me, beginning to go down-hill, with a deal of hard work left behind them. It's cold comfort to think as the young ones are better off for our being worse," the shopwoman added drily.

I was disinclined to join in this criticism of the old man, whose tender anxiety for some small child had touched me; so I made my own purchase and went away without taking up the subject.

The following morning was showery, with snatches of rain and gusts of wind coming like bursts of bad temper from the scowling west. Nevertheless, I took up my old place at Meadow Bridge, and went on with my picture. My attention had been occupied a few minutes by the rearrangement of my belongings, which had been temporarily disturbed by a puff of wind: when I looked up again suddenly, it was to perceive once more a little figure in the landscape. This time it was more odd than picturesque, for it was disguised in a long, shiny, and spreading black macintosh, which descended like a conical hill from its neck to the ground. Above its neck, a peaked hood, also shiny and black, hid its head, and pointed fantastically to the rainy skies. Its identity with the scarlet-shawled child of the past was, however, proved by its curious wobbling and yet sturdy gait. Exceeding smallness and inexperience in the best style of progression seemed to be the explanation of its jerky form of advance; for in spite of this, it gave the observer the impression of being an infant who could take care of itself. It was toddling briskly from the bridge towards the town, with some very definite intention impelling its sturdy little legs, when a young girl ran out of the cottage and overtook it. She snatched it up in her arms, shook it, kissed it, and cried, "Dolly, Dolly, I told you never to go this way again;" then seeing me, for I had risen and was looking with interest at the little scene—the pretty girl and the funny child, the shaking and the kissing—she said, with an excited burst of feeling, "Oh, sir, I wish we could get away from this place, and never, never, see it again. Never any more!"

She seemed startled by her own effusiveness, or ashamed of it, and hastened back to the cottage with the child in her arms.

But this was how I came to know that the nice old man who bought the macintosh must be Matthew Gibson of Meadow Bridge.

CHAPTER III.

LANDSCAPE FIGURES.

A CERTAIN fascination drew me frequently to that ill-omened place. The river there lent itself easily to purposes of art, and I soon began to feel an unusual interest in the little family dwelling near.

Dolly had the charm of childhood, and atoned, by the drollness of her conversation, for the hardness of character which I fancied I saw from the beginning of my acquaintance with her. Mary was pretty and pleasing. I sympathized with her evident anxiety about her family, and with the deep impression which the recent tragic events had made upon her. She was afraid of a recurrence of them ; she disliked living near the spot ; yet her very uneasiness kept her there continually ; she seemed to fear that, if she left home for many hours together, as it had been her former habit to do, something dreadful would happen in her absence to the old man or the child. The weight of all this anxiety on so young a head was increased by the comparative indifference with which the two other members of her family seemed to regard it. Dolly was too young and Matthew too old to be much moved to terror or sympathy by the recent deaths. Dolly did not realize them apparently any more than Wordsworth's little maiden realized the fate of the brother and the sister in the church-yard, whose company she sought at supper-time—

"A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb ;
What should it know of death ?

Dolly Gibson—so it seemed to me—would have enjoyed bringing her "little porringer," and eating her supper by the bridge, on the mere chance of seeing some one drowning there. The rushing and crying round the dead body, the congregating and talking of the neighbours afterwards, "seemed as good as a play" to this singular child.

Her grandfather was, on the other hand, too old to be much excited by any new experience. Years had dulled his faculties somewhat, and reduced all events which did not touch his personal life to the level of mere spectacles more or less moving, things from which to point a moral, but more especially circumstances fitted to adorn a tale. He even felt a vague enjoyment, as I fancied, in the importance reflected on himself by the mystery of Meadow Bridge ; he loved to talk about it, to point out how the accidents must have happened, and how future accidents should be avoided. Yet, although so garrulous, and a little self-important, he seemed kindly and good. His domestic affections were evidently strong, for he doted on little Dolly, and he was charitable to his neighbours according to his means.

I first made his acquaintance when sitting in the cottage of a poor woman—a widow with many children—who lived not far away, on the side of Ravenscar. He called to leave her a jug of milk, and she told me afterwards that he had brought or sent to her just such a useful present every day since her own cow had died, some weeks before.

"We're too poor to buy another yet, until my girl Martha, who's in service, sends us a few pounds to help. But Matthew Gibson's a good

man, and one that's kind to folk in trouble," said the widow, thus corroborating what my landlady and the shopwoman had both said.

I often saw Matthew after this. He would come out and talk to me, as I sat sketching ; or invite me into his cottage to shelter if rain came on. It struck me at these times that he was less tender to Mary than to little Dolly, but this might be because Mary vexed him by wanting to give up the old home, and sometimes also by following him uneasily when he wandered about the banks near the bridge. An old man naturally resents the guardianship and interference of those whom he has been accustomed to rule ; he cannot realize that it is necessary ; he wants to prove that it is not so ; and his sensitiveness often increases in proportion to his growing infirmities.

Poor Mary had a sad time of it therefore, with her dogged old grandfather and her wilful little sister. Mrs. Timson used to talk to me of her sometimes with sympathy.

"They do say, sir, as Matthew's getting more and more queer. I don't know if you've happened to notice it. He gets talking of those deaths as if they were to go on happening for ever and ever, and I have heard tell as how he keeps the number of them chalked up in crosses behind the door, for all the world like a score at a public-house ; for old Matthew can't write, sir, though he's had Mary brought up so well. Mary's in trouble about something else, sir, I do believe. She's being keeping company long enough with John Edge, a respectable young man, sir—you must have seen him at the blacksmith's—and now that something's wrong between them is clear enough for anybody who cares to see. But if folk have been making mischief, and telling tales about John Edge, Mary's a silly lass to believe them."

I knew John Edge already, and now I remembered that his bright look and pleasant manner—one of friendly independence—had been clouded over of late. He had rather avoided me when we met in the road. These meetings had been more frequent on the path to Meadow Bridge than elsewhere ; he was often going to the cottage as I left it. I now understood what had taken him in that direction so many times a week ; but I did not see why he should be offended because I went too.

The very next day after this enlightenment from Mrs. Timson, Mary Gibson surprised me by refusing to finish sitting for a sketch I was making of her in the cottage porch. She had always before seemed quite glad to bring her chair and sew outside whenever it was fine enough. I thought that she was pleased to have an excuse to remain so near the place she dreaded, not on her own account, but for the sake of her sister and grandfather. She seemed glad, also, of the chance of a little cheerful talk. I was a stranger to the place, a mere incident of the moment, who would go away soon and be forgotten ; therefore, perhaps, she felt it easier to speak freely to me than to her neighbours, who would always remain her neighbours, and who repeated to others everything that was said to them, until it became the property of the "country-side."

She seemed like a girl who had some secret trouble, and who was afraid to talk to any one who might guess it, or to any one who would wish to discover it. She found, in the solitude and restraint of her life, an apparent refuge and relief

in talking to me of things outside her own world. I was therefore the more surprised when she abruptly refused to come out and sit in the porch, in spite of the fineness of the afternoon and the fact that she was quietly knitting alone.

"Well, Mary, I'm sorry if I've offended you," I remarked; "I seem to be losing all my friends. John Edge won't look at me now when he sees me, and here you are going to throw me over and my picture too, without giving any reason for it."

"Won't John Edge look at you, sir? He ought to know better than that." Mary had risen and began to arrange a tea-tray with busy fingers, which permitted her to keep her face averted from me, but did not hide her heightened colour. "It's John Edge who does not like me to sit for my picture. Everybody knows about me and John Edge, sir," she put in here apologetically. "He says it puts me up to fancies. That's great nonsense, I know; but I don't like to vex him, sir, when there's no need."

She paused a moment, as if for a reply.

I answered cordially, "Certainly not, Mary," and she seemed satisfied.

But I was resolved to have it out with John Edge, whom I perceived to be guilty of a foolish and groundless jealousy. I finished—from memory—a sketch of Mary in the porch, and when next I met him I stopped to talk, ignored his sulkiness, showed him the sketch, and finally made him a present of it. He seemed surprised, flattered, and perplexed; but I finished my conquest of him by showing other sketches, including one of the young lady to whom I was engaged, and whom I hoped to marry the following summer. After that he yielded completely, and in the reaction of confidence after suspicion, he asked me if I had any idea what had made Mary Gibson change her manner to him.

"I should not think it changed for the worse, if I were you, since she has refused to sit for any more sketches, because you do not like it," I answered.

"Did she do that?" asked John Edge, looking pleased; "but she won't let me go and see her as I used to; and she won't give any reason except that she doesn't like me coming over that bridge, which is the shortest way. You know, sir, it's nonsense to think that there's any danger there for a man like me: because a drunkard, and an idiot, and a schoolboy got drowned, does she think I can't take care of myself? Do I look like a man who'll walk over a railing in the dark, or lose my way in a field?"

I had to confess that he didn't; but I urged, on Mary's behalf, the exceeding unreasonableness of women, and the excessive timidity of their affection.

"I can't believe but what it's an excuse, sir, and there's something else behind it. Anyhow," he said, with a look of determination, "I won't give up going—and as often as I used to go, too—until she gives me a better reason than that for stopping away."

He had right on his side, and I could not argue against his resolution; but I felt that poor Mary was likely to have little relief from her morbid terrors while all those belonging to her showed so much wilfulness in ignoring them.

(To be continued.)

AN AULD LICHT MINISTER.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

NEVER was there a man more uncomfortably loved than our Auld Licht minister. Easie Haggart, his maid-servant, reproved him at the breakfast table. Old wives and grey-beards grumbled by their hearths when he did not look in to despair of their salvation. The maidens of his congregation he told to beware lest they made an idol of him. His two leading elders saw him in conversation with a strange woman, and asked him, in an anonymous letter, if he remembered that he had a wife. Twenty were his years when he came among us, and he knocked a board out of the pulpit the first Sabbath. Before beginning his trial sermon he handed the big Bible down to the precentor to give his arms freer swing. The congregation, in a tremble of excitement, probed his meaning. Not a square inch of "paper" could be concealed there. Mr. Dishart had hardly any hope for the Auld Lichts. He had none for any other body. Davit Lunan got behind his hand-kerchief to take a pinch of snuff, and he was on him like a tiger. The call was unanimous. Lunan proposed him.

Every few years the Auld Licht kirk gave way, so to speak, and buried the minister. The congregation turned its empty pockets inside out, and the pastor departed in a farmer's cart. To the Auld Lichts was there the humiliation of seeing their pulpit supplied on alternate Sabbaths by itinerant probationers and stickit ministers. But when they were not starving themselves to support a pastor, they were saving up for a stipend. They retired with compressed lips to their looms and weaved till they weaved another minister. Without the grief of parting with one pastor, there could not be the excitement of choosing another. To have had a minister with them always would have puffed them up.

The Auld Lichts were seldom more than twelve months in making a selection, and in their haste they would have passed our Mr. Dishart and mated with a monster. So many years have elapsed since a providential hand tore the mask from Mr. Watts's face, that no near relative can survive to be pained by a recital of the circumstances. Mr. Watts was a probationer who had occasionally supplied the pulpit, and though not so young as might have been wished (for he had now reached four-and-twenty years), he was seemly in Auld Licht eyes. It was a bumpy parish, and the dominie called approving attention to the way he lifted his legs. He came to Croup with a great reputation, having once on the fast-day refused a token to his wife; and there seemed to be good stuff in a preacher who stopped his sermon to thunder forth, "Sluggard in the last, awake!" But a breeze from heaven exposed him on Communion Sabbath.

On the evening of this most solemn day the door of the Auld Licht kirk was closed, and the congregation, instead of hobbling to their worn, shining seats, trooped, with their Bibles in their hands, down the Tansie brae. They had a prescriptive right to the public common, or comony, on Communion Sabbath, and they were not given to miss their chances. It was the Covenanters come back to life. To the summit

of the slope a wooden box was slowly hauled by the Auld Licht Session, and round this reverent Auld Lichts and interested outsiders quietly grouped. The sun, drawing itself together in the heavens, no longer intruded on the comony, and all the braes and houses echoed the cracked and agitated Auld Licht bell.

With slow, majestic tread, the Session advanced up the sloping sward, with the boyish minister in its midst, and more cherubic he could scarce have looked though they had been about to offer him up for sacrifice. Communion Sabbath was his grandest opportunity for a sustained effort. Then he held his congregation in the palm of his hand, and the more he squeezed them, the better they were pleased. The box consisted of two compartments—one for the minister, and the other, the lower, for the preceptor. He would have been a poor creature who thought this pulpit resembled a puppet-show. The enthusiasm of the boy in the pulpit, who was really wonderful for his size, killed criticism, and Lang Tammas lingered over the psalm-lines with unctuous effect. This was the "tent-preaching."

Mr. Watts was conducting the services on the comony. It was a fine, still night, and but for the whining of an occasional dog, the clerical drone alone broke the silence. The minister passed from "lastly and briefly" to "I cannot allow this opportunity to pass," and the Auld Lichts bowed their heads in emphatic approval. He seemed in a fair way to beat all past record, when a rush of wind tore up the common and ran straight at the pulpit. It formed in a sieve and passed over the heads of the multitude, who looked up in awe. Lang Tammas in his box below distinctly heard the leaves of the pulpit Bible shiver. Mr. Watts's hands, outstretched to prevent a dire catastrophe, were blown against his side, and twenty sheets of closely written paper floated into the air. The minister (if such he can be called) shrunk back in the box appalled, and the horrified congregation slowly realized that Mr. Watts, the man whom they had been on the point of calling, "read" from a "paper" concealed in the pulpit. Ten minutes afterwards the Session alone were on the comony. They looked a little curious, jumping, like trout at flies, at the damning evidence of the minister's guilt fluttering in the air. To sit under a pastor who "read" was to the Auld Lichts like claiming heaven on false pretences.

Mr. Dishart's manner in the pulpit was a remarkable instance of what early application can accomplish. At the age of ten he had entered the University, and from far and near strangers went to his father's kirk to see the inspired boy practising the art of gesticulation in a front gallery pew. The seed sown in those days of his comparative youth bore rich fruit in our Auld Licht Kirk. So long as the pulpit cushions lasted, we only saw him dimly in a cloud of dust, and perhaps it was too much as if he were burning incense. He introduced headaches. Once in a superb transport of enthusiasm he flung his arms over the pulpit and struck Lang Tammas on the head. He would balance himself on his chest on the pulpit boards and pommel the Evil One with both hands, then he would whirl round to the left and clench his fist at Mag Tamson's bonnet. With a marvellous jump he would be on Sam'l Todd's laddie, pro-

fanely catching flies. Stiff and erect, he would leap three times in the air. He would gather himself together in a corner for a terrific spring. When you wanted to slip a peppermint lozenge into your mouth, you never knew when you had him. When he wept he seemed to be laughing, and he laughed in a paroxysm of tears. He battled the pulpit door and punched the pulpit trappings with a vindictiveness that was hardly Christian. When he ceased to whirl like a windmill, he assumed the appearance of a pump. The pump pose was the more terrible, for then he glared motionless at Tibbie Mealmaker, as if the upraised arm, or handle, had stuck. It was the calm that presages the storm. Tibbie bore up bravely under the windmill, but the pump affected her to tears. She was stone deaf.

For the first year of his ministry an Auld Licht pastor was a mouse in a circle of cats. The comunity watched intently for unsound doctrine, both in the kirk and out of it, and when the minister diverged from the narrow path they had him in an instant by the neck. Mr. Dishart, however, who was one of the finest men I ever knew, had been brought up in the true way, and the congregation grew in time despondent. They sat back in their pews with all suspicion of lurking heresy allayed; and only when Mr. Dishart and another minister exchanged pulpits did they lean forward to snap the preacher up. Mr. Dishart was not without his trials. Lang Tammas objected to his unseemly running between stricken houses to save time. It was much questioned whether he did right in insisting that the "ladle" should be handed up to the pulpit for his donation. Those who should have known said that he felt deeply the shortsightedness of the old parish church minister. When Mr. Volume first met him he made a mistake, and clapping him on the head told him he would be a man yet. Then there was the memorable split in the congregation, which comes once in a lifetime to every Auld Licht minister.

The congregation were thinking of approaching him through the medium of Easie Haggart, on the subject of matrimony, for he was turned twenty and had seventy pounds a year, when one day he disappeared in the Edinburgh coach, and when he returned his bride accompanied him. The Auld Lichts nodded their sapient heads into each others faces, but said nothing to the minister. If he did not choose to take them into his confidence, it was no business of theirs. When Sandy Whamond lost his eldership, his wife, Bell Dundas, said that Mrs. Dishart, before her marriage, had been a U.P. But though there was something mysterious about her, the minister would hardly have gone that length.

Easie Haggart was among the thorns in Mr. Dishart's flesh. When he had company, she stood at the door and joined in the congregation. If another minister was present she took a chair and discussed Mr. Dishart's infirmities. The Auld Lichts loved their pastor with a fervour passing the love of women, but they saw even more clearly than himself the necessity for his humiliation. He made his children's boots and taught them, but his Session once complained that his wife looked too like their sister. The latter years of his life was weighed down by a debt of four pounds that his creditor had forgotten all about. He paid it in sixpences and pennies, and died happy.

SHE was Lady Eva Waynflete, and he was Sam Hill, a haymaker. At least, he worked in the hay, and got paid for his labour, like the rest of the hired labourers on Lady Eva's estate.

Apparently he had come over, like the others from Ireland, in search of work; only he had done what none of the others had—viz., brought an old woman with him, ostensibly his mother, and rented a small rose-covered cottage for the summer.

That was all that was really known of him in the little village of Waynflete.

He was left pretty much to himself by his fellow workmen, as well as by the villagers; not that he gave himself airs (and he was a most regular church-goer), but he neither drank nor smoked, and very seldom talked. He was known to have a villainous temper, to be very free with oaths and curses, and to be ready to draw a knife on the slightest provocation. All instinctively knew and were aggrieved at the knowledge that he was not what he pretended to be.

To look at he was gaunt and muscular, had long brawny arms, and a face swart as a gipsy; but neither pure gipsy, nor lineally descended son of the soil ever had such an aristocratic mouth, nose, or chin. His smile was cynical, his eyes full of gloom. His neighbours had never heard him say a kind word, or do a kind action. Yet, so strange and perverse is womankind, he had more bright glances directed at him than many a worthy yokel obtained, who had oiled his hair and soaped his face, with the trembling hope that coy Phyllis might be won by such shining attractions.

Life was very dull for Lady Eva Waynflete. She was twenty-four, had been an only child, and was now an orphan. She lived on her estate with an old aunt for propriety. Lady Eva had not been happily constituted. She did not like the country, but she abhorred town. She was neither quick nor clever, took no interest in social questions, but hated small talk more. She cared little for painting, still less about flowers. She only endured animals and tolerated birds. Women she cordially despised; with men she was shy, and ill at ease in their presence. At first people had been inclined to make a fuss of her, ladies were ready to introduce her as a new beauty; men were willing to have her trotted out, and balance her and her belongings against single blessedness. But when Lady Eva persistently declined such kind overtures, would do nothing so fashionable as take a house in London for the season, or go to Brighton at the regulated time, when she simply refused to have her park cut up into tennis-courts, and professed no wish to institute afternoon seances or midnight mesmerisms, the county shrugged its shoulders, voted Lady Eva Waynflete a very odd young person, and resolved to leave her to her own eccentric courses; which pleased the odd young person vastly, who cared very little what people said of her as long as they let her alone.

Still life was dull, there was no concealing it. To her, working was inane, reading insipid. A high price had been paid at a high-class seminary for Lady Eva to do as she liked, and she had done it. Her mind was still in embryo, her body splendidly

rose. Music only she loved, and was a proficient on the organ and the harp. But even a musical enthusiast can find it dull to play continuously for seven hours a day with no audience but a deaf aunt and a lame pug.

There were confused accounts as to how Lady Eva first became aware of the existence of Sam Hill. Some said that he had valiantly rescued her from a bull which attacked her while she was taking one of those solitary rambles which civilization forbids and society deplores. Others declared that she had taken refuge at his cottage in a thunder-storm, underwent a process of enchantment, and became the lawful prey of the evil one as personified by Sam Hill. The saner portion of the community averred that his exquisite baritone had reached her in the church, that with her usual august directness she had stopped him at the door, and requested him to come up and sing in the choir as long as he was in the neighbourhood.

We will not stop to discuss now the various conflicting statements; probably, the last supposition was the most correct; probably, she went to the curate, told him what she had done, and ordered him to make the necessary inquiries as to his sobriety, norality, etc.; probably, the nervous representative of the God-created establishment of the English church, bowed before his lady-patroness, folded his limp hands timidly together, and professed himself only too delighted to take any trouble to please her; probably, also he was discreet enough to forget to make the inquiries, or having made them, kept them within his own breast.

The fact remains the same—Lady Eva played the organ, and Sam Hill joined in the choir. Then life began for this poor Lady Eva who was a child in heart if a woman in everything else. The pages were turned over for her by a skilful hand, the instrument was opened, the music was handed to her; every little attention performed delicately and with no ostentation. At the close of the service he waited, holding her gloves and parasol till she was ready to take them from him; he lingered while she descended first, and bowed almost reverently as she passed him. As time went on it was observed that he overtook her—dare we say she loitered? He joined her in the grassy lane, and talked as he only could talk; telling in soft, deep tones, tales of California, of sheep-stealing, of gold-digging, of moonlight murders, of thirst-stricken fevers.

She listened gravely and sweetly, never saying much, for she had not yet learnt to reveal her soul: heart language was still unknown to her; but she never stopped him, never said him nay. It did not enter her head to wonder how he spoke so well, sang in so evidently a cultivated way, why he held himself so erect, knew so exactly what to do, and how far to go. Like a simple child listening to a fairy tale she believed it all implicitly, and never asked how or why.

Night after night she would wend her way to a deep-cut lane between mossy banks and flower-grown hedges, and wait on a stile till the tall angular figure with the finely-chiselled features was seen hastening towards her. She never feigned surprise, nor blushed at his approach. With a kind of regal frankness she disdained all petty coquetry. He would come and lean against

the gate, and she waited for him to speak. His moods were very various, but she was no coward, and patiently waited while he growled and complained, or savagely and bitterly lamented his fate, and jeered at fortune for the way in which she had treated him. He had once even cursed, not quite beneath his breath, and when he stopped short with a half apology, she had murmured, "Never mind."

Until that summer she had scarcely noticed the smell of the new-mown hay; she had hardly known the fragrant meadow-sweet, or the dainty beauty of the wild hedge-rose. Those walks in the whispering woods taught her to see and taught her to hear. Honeysuckle and woodbine trailed at her feet; great ox-eyed daisies kissed her hands, and the dark heavy foliage swept above her dusky head and sighed lingeringly of unsaid vows.

They would saunter across the fields which were one sheet of silver moonlight; the moon herself gazing almost immodestly at them from her domed starry bed. They would dawdle in the little tract of land misnamed a garden that joined his cottage, which boasted of little else beyond cabbages and those single pale roses with the dark green leaves, which abound in country churchyards. The rarest and most fragrant flowers bloomed and blossomed unheeded in Lady Eva's hot-houses: none were to her so sweet and fair as the common graveyard rose he gathered for her to wear. His cabin was secluded, the garden was sheltered, and they paused often by the rose bushes to say a last few words.

Once a bramble caught in her hair, and as he stooped to disentangle it, his moustache waved over her forehead, his hands touched her face; one short word was thrillingly whispered into her ear—a word which tinged her creamy cheek to a sea-shell pink. To be precise she did not catch the exact word, nor could even she ask him to repeat it; but unimaginative as she was, she knew enough to go home slowly repeating:—

"I am Lady Eva Waynflete, and he is Sam Hill, a haymaker."

Of course people talked: who could help it?

But how was she to know? Who dare tell her? Not the pale-faced curate, who trembled when she spoke to him; who was troubled with a truly virginal mind, and could not bring himself to speak on so delicate a subject. He could not forget that she was unmarried, so was he, which caused a great deal to be understood; and Lady Eva, as he had reason to know, refused to understand on certain occasions. No one could be so densely obtuse as Lady Eva when it suited; an unfortunate circumstance, for it necessitated quite a coarse explanation before she allowed that she comprehended, and from this his virginal nature recoiled. Who could tell her? Not her deaf aunt who knew nothing that was going on; not a tried and trusted servant, for they were all comparatively new. To interfere with Lady Eva would cost any one of them his place, and a place at Waynflete meant little work, good pay, and no supervision. No; she must go on her own way uncounselled and unchecked.

How would it end?

Both asked themselves the question, he with passionate intensity, she with a vague dreaminess, not wishing it to end at all, nor daring to formulate in her mind the stern fact that it could not last, it must end sooner or later—yes, sooner or later.

Which was it to be? He had stayed on for the corn-harvest, and done odd jobs here and there, always coming back to his cottage in the dell. He was going to stay for the harvest thanksgiving, and after that, no one knew. Now he was cutting the corn with a number of others on Lady Eva's cornfields; and she, with a royal disregard of conventionality, came down to the field with her steward, called him to speak to her, kept him by her side, speaking sedately and demurely, what every one might hear; but singling him out in a way that but increased his unpopularity among his comrades, the more so, as they had not yet recovered their equanimity on learning that Lady Eva sent for him to the house to practise some solo for the harvest festival. This fact let out by one of the servants who would not have objected to his attention, added fresh fuel to the smouldering fire of their discontent. Sam knew it all, but only scowled the more, was recklessly defiant, and showed that he scorned them all alike.

The hot August sun blazed on the heated brows and bent forms of the reapers as, having completed their survey, Lady Eva and her steward walked from the field.

"That fellow is a sulky dog," said the steward, indicating Sam with his stick, "and yet all the village lasses are mad about him; it is his own fault if he does not take a wife home with him. Folk say he has his eye on little Nannie Shelley, your kitchen maid."

Lady Eva said "Indeed," which was as much as she ever said. But when alone, she paced her terrace walk, and thought of what she had been told. Why should it not be so? Could it be Lady Eva to be jealous of her kitchen maid? The commonness of her late proceedings struck her with a fearful chill. She repeated over and over again, but the words sounded hollow and brought no meaning.

"I am Lady Eva Waynflete; and he is Sam Hill, a haymaker."

The iron entered into her soul and tortured her.

Other men had held aloof from her, had been afraid of her apathy, had detected contempt in her cool indifference, had discovered scorn beneath her passive languor. But he, with strong audacity, had forced her to know him; had claimed companionship as a right, her friendship as a gift. As the stronger he had taken the lead; had assumed a power to guard her—and—she had let him take it!

What wonder if companionship and friendship had softened into love? For after all Lady Eva was only a human being, and love may generally be resolved into a question of proximity.

While poor Lady Eva was suffering from being brought into rivalry with her kitchen maid, while the vulgarity and lowness (or what he might regard as such) of her conduct, was painfully forced upon her, Sam Hill was fretting and fuming beneath the stars asking himself over and over again, "How will it end?"

His life had not been a good life; he knew it, and he owned it.

He had victimized many a woman, and felt no pang of remorse.

He was at the present time living under an assumed name and with an assumed occupation, to escape the hands of justice for a dastard deed. All his life he had been desperate; should he do

the boldest act of a bold career and ask Lady Eva to share his fate? Even his passionate love did not prevent him from gauging her correctly. He knew that she was not impulsive, that she was cautious and slow to act. He felt that if he asked her to marry him he must tell her all, for she would not wed in the dark.

That telling all comprised so much from which his nature shrank!

He walked about till dawn and came to no decision, then had to go to work.

The sun shone fiercely, and Sam worked as if his life depended on it. As usual he was taciturn to the others; he looked and looked in vain for some sign of Lady Eva; she never came in sight. The heat affected the tempers of the reapers, and as the afternoon waned, work slackened, conversation was louder and less friendly.

Full of a strange unrest, Lady Eva tossed aside her embroidery, and about seven o'clock left the house. The air was very oppressive; a hot steam seemed to flutter on the earth's surface; the sky was a thick pearly haze, and the sun like a great clot of glorified blood.

Did jealousy make her bend her steps in the direction of the cornfield; did she wish to satisfy herself that he wanted her friendship—and nothing more?

She walked slowly, very slowly, down the lane, hidden from the workers by the tall hedges and spreading trees. Through the leaves she saw the reapers standing in a group in the centre of the field, round some one, taller and darker than the rest. Instinctively she paused: Sam Hill was standing at bay with his head thrown back and a set look on his face which was not nice to see.

And as she stood spell-bound on that still summer night, words came wafted to her which made her blood run cold. Her name was bandied about from one labourer to another; loose jokes raised a hearty laugh; low epithets were applied to her which brought cordial applause. Sam Hill stood there with a haughty curve on his lips, motionless and proud; he knew they were trying to rouse him, and he disdained to be roused by such a motley crew. But his patience wore out at last: his blood was up, and at some insult to her he sprung on one side as if he had been stung, drew a knife from his pocket, deliberately opened it, and flung it at the speaker.

It missed its aim (perhaps it was intended to do so), the man rushed at him, and they closed in deadly struggle. The contest was fairly equal, and there was no telling who would have gained the victory if Sam Hill had not tripped and fallen heavily on his own knife. The blade entered his chest, and in a moment the stubble was dyed with the rich dark blood which poured from the wound. The whole scene had lasted but a few minutes.

The men stood off frightened and aghast at the still prone figure of one whom a short hour ago had been among them in his vigour and prime.

How she did it she could not tell, but when she saw him fall Lady Eva got over the fence, came up to the spot, and the first thing she could remember was that she was sitting on the ground, and his head was on her lap.

She knew as in a dream that one had gone for the doctor, another for some water, a third to the Hall for some bandages, a fourth to a cottage for some boards on which to bear him home, but

whether she had sent them, or why they all so shamefacedly slunk away she could not have told then.

She knew that she was left alone with the gaunt gory man; his livid face turned up to the sky, his heart's blood dripping on to her white dress, and trickling down the arm she had placed to support him. At first, mechanically, she had taken her handkerchief of the finest cambric and tried to staunch the wound, but it had been saturated in a moment, and she had helplessly let it fall. So she remained in her dazed unthinking agony: he never moved and she never spoke: she saw nothing but blood and corn, and corn and blood; she heard nothing but the beating of her own heart, and the ticking of her own watch.

It seemed like hours though but a short time had elapsed when two men returned with strips of coarse linen with which they bound his wound roughly but effectively; the doctor arrived before this operation was completed, and as soon as a shutter could be procured, Sam Hill was placed on it and borne to his cottage. Lady Eva followed, not caring that her dress was blood-stained, her hand wet with damp sweat from his brow, her face wan and haggard as a spectre. She must know how it would end; the doctor had not said it was hopeless, and she lived on his very words.

She will never forget that walk, though it lasted but twenty minutes. The sun had set, and the full harvest moon gazed placidly and calmly on the peaceful landscape. The stars came out one by one, the cool dusk brought out eerie bats, ghostly night-birds, croaking frogs, and fluttering insects. Far away in the distance was the faint swirl of the sea, beating against the rocks as her heart beat against her breast.

When she walked down the garden path, which so often ere now she had traversed in company with him, she found that the doctor had dismissed everybody, and was in the sick man's room with Mrs. Hill. Lady Eva sat down patiently in the porch; she could hear voices low and hushed inside; she would wait and meet him here. So she sat, and leaned her head against the green lattice work, and saw as one who did not see, the shadows of the trees, the patches of clear cold moonlight, the shining ripples on the water-lilies in the pond. She looked through the open door, into the tidy kitchen, and wondered what was the use of so many kinds of pans, hung up over the dresser; wondered if people ever forgot and used the wrong sort, and if the result was very disastrous; wondered if Sam swore when his dinner was not right, and had a strange tight feeling in her throat, which recalled her to herself. Had she been dreaming there, or was she going to sleep now? She felt sick and shivery; there was a fire in the grate; she would go and sit by it. She got up giddy and weak, entered the kitchen, and helped herself to some milk standing in a tumbler, then found some water and washed her hands. She had hardly sat down again, when the doctor came from the inner room. He started when he saw her.

"Lady Eva, this is very good of you to take so much interest in your tenants. You must be worn out with the annoyance of so disagreeable a thing having happened on your property. I have sent for my trap to come here at once, you must let me drive you home."

"Your patient?" she contrived to ask.

"Can't do much for him," he said briskly; "he won't last more than a couple of hours. He has literally bled to death; pity, he seems a fine fellow."

Doctor Clare was a new comer, and knew no reason why he should soften the verdict to her. He practised the fashionable swagger of eminent physicians, and boasted of polishing off so many cases in so many minutes. This had been a neat case; he had seen at once all that could be done, and he had done it. He could not understand the simple villagers credulity in his skill, nor how they looked up to him as having the power of life and death in his hands.

He was rattling on in this strain to his unheeding listener, saying how Mrs. Hill was beside herself with grief, and besought him to cure the sick man, insisted on his sending some medicine, though he knew it was useless, when Mrs. Hill joined them.

Once glance at the ashen face and wild woful eyes made Lady Eva aware that she was in the presence of a grief deeper than her own.

"You have not gone yet, doctor?" Mrs. Hill said, and there was reproach in her tone.

"I am waiting for my trap, my good woman."

"I have been thinking," she went on, never casting one glance at the other visitor, "that may be you would give me a lift doctor; I should get the medicine quicker than if we wait for traps and boys."

"Impossible," he answered impatiently. "Lady Eva will have the vacant seat, the boy must walk back and will bring it without delay."

"It is losing time, sir," she persisted, "every moment is of value. I have to answer for his life to those to whom it is precious; he must not die."

Here she broke down, and throwing her apron over her head began to wail. Doctor Clare looked apologetically at Lady Eva.

"It is very disagreeable when these people will make scenes," he remarked, "she does not know what she says."

"You must take her as she asks," replied Lady Eva, suddenly, "I will stay till she comes back."

Doctor Clare knew that Lady Eva was reputed eccentric, but even with that knowledge he was slightly staggered at such an exhibition of it. It was useless to contest the matter; she was her own mistress; and he did not forget that compliance might gain him an entrance to Waynifete Hall, and an entrance not very far off, he thought, as he drove away with the old woman, and left Lady Eva standing in the porch looking more dead than alive. She waited till the sound of the wheels had died away, then went to the sick man's room.

* * * * *

He is lying with closed eyes, propped up with pillows, his pallid face and bloodless lips standing out in contrast with his jet hair. His hands are outside on the counterpane; there is a rigid air about the figure which strikes her with awe.

She sinks on her knees, she dare not touch, she can only gaze and gaze. She is dumb in her misery. He opens his eyes, and shows no surprise at seeing her there. Still she kneels and looks; she knows that he is going from her, and going from her for ever; yet she is powerless to tell the anguish of her soul, or confess her love for him.

Presently there is a convulsive tremor through his frame, his fingers close and unclose; he opens his eyes and keeps them open.

"Am I going to live?" he asks, and there is a fierce eagerness in the faint tones.

She only shakes her head.

"How long shall I last?"

"Two hours."

There is a hoarse rattle in her throat, and she has to clutch the bed-clothes to keep from falling.

A look of relief passes over his face.

"I may tell you all then," he says, "I was bound by oath before. I want your pity and I want your love."

He stops and breathes heavily.

She bows her head still lower; not a sound comes from her lips.

"It is a long tale," he begins, with a gasp.

She raises her head and shudders at the greyness of his face. She wipes the sweat away, and moistens his stiffening lips with water.

"Don't tell it," she whispers, as she bends over him, "it can make no difference now."

He takes her hand and keeps it; there is silence for a while.

"You knew I loved you?" he inquires presently, and approaching annihilation has not robbed his voice of its tenderness.

"Yes;" no blush, no bashfulness, a plain question asked, a plain answer given.

"And you loved me, too?"

"Yes;" the word comes from her parched mouth with an effort; she could not have said more.

"Kiss me before I die."

He makes a movement as if he would take her in his arms, but her grief finds utterance at last.

She throws herself on her knees, and, taking his hand, presses it closely and passionately to her lips. She bows herself over it, and he feels the great hot tears fall thickly on his wrist and arm.

He lies back with a happy smile till this storm of grief and passion, love and despair have passed. After all he has understood her as no one else has or ever will again.

He waits till nature has relieved itself, and while he waits—he dies.

When, at last, her bosom heaves less convulsively, and she raises her head with a new-born lovelight in her eyes, she meets in return only the gaze of a corpse, and sees a sweet smile on his lips such as they have never worn since he was a child.

Lady Eva does not faint, she does not scream; she gently unclasps the dead hand, still warm, from contact with hers, and, moving on tip-toe, creeps away from the cottage as if afraid of disturbing some one asleep.

She walks unsteadily through the lane into the very field, sees the pool of dark red blood, the dyed wheat-ears, stoops and picks up a few, sees what glistens like a crimson rag, recognizes her own cambric, and takes it though not yet dry. She sees the fatal knife, and still calmly though as one walking in her sleep, she takes it, shuts it with difficulty, ponders a moment, and then throws it down again. It might be wanted at the inquest. She gets home, locks herself in her room, and throws herself on her bed. Blood dances before her eyes, glitters, shines, sparkles; she sees bloody cloths, bloody faces, bloody fingers wherever she looks. Yet with it all comes the unspoken

thought: "It is better so; it never could have been."

For days she was prostrate and had to lie in a dark room, too ill to appear at the inquest, too ill even to know when they buried him. She went abroad as soon as she was well, and before her departure never sought the old woman, never paid a visit to his grave. So his secret died with him; she never tried to know. That one brief dream was over, why try to revive the pain?

Two more years and she was married to one of her own rank, young, rich, and good. He was justly proud of her and their four children. People envied her, and said no wonder she became younger and handsomer every year—she had not even the fabled rose-leaf in her lot.

None knew of a certain satin-wood box which held a piece of fine cambric, stained almost brown, and a few wheat-ears of the same rusty hue. None saw her shudder as she touched these things; none saw her face as once more she beheld the golden corn, a setting sun, a ghastly strong face and blood—blood pouring over the picture till all became a confused mist and mingled with her tears.

None heard her whisper as she closed the spring:

"I was Lady Eva, and he, a haymaker."

THE WIND AND THE HAWTHORN BLOSSOMS.

OVER the rippling river
I hear the wind's low sigh;
The rushes bend and quiver
When e'er it passes by.
The wondrous song of Ocean
It bears upon his wings,
And a strange and new emotion
In every blossom springs.

The hawthorn boughs are breaking
Into showers of scented snow,
Which the breeze is lightly shaking
Down to the stream below.
Ah! foolish, tiny flowers
To leave the parent tree,
And seek the coral bowers
Of the far-off, singing sea.

The heedless wind has told them
That if they can reach the waves,
The Ocean will clasp and fold them
Away in its gleaming caves;
And to shining pearls transform them,
Or whispering, tinted shells,
Or set them to chime till the end of all Time
A miniature peal of bells.

The cruel, darkening river
Hurries them swiftly by,
And the trees and rushes shiver,
For the blossoms are doomed to die;
And each tiny heart is riven
With the storm that breaks 'ere the day,
And the hope that the wind had given
Hath perished for ever and aye.

A. J. M. L.

WASPS.

If we admit that wasps are beautiful, it is about all we can say in their favour. They meet with universal detestation, and, perhaps, not without reason. Still, these much-persecuted insects are worthy of some consideration. That they were the first inventors of paper cannot be doubted, while as architects and builders they far excel savage man. A wasp's nest is of superior construction to many human houses, even in our own country. Some kinds build in holes in the earth, others in trees. With the first warm days of spring, single wasps may be seen flying about sunny banks, examining every hole and corner with great care. These are queens that have survived the winter, on the outlook for a desirable residence. They spent their winter asleep, in solitary seclusion, for the nest is only used for rearing the next generation. Having found a suitable place, the queen mother begins to work, not at the foundation, but at the roof of her domicile. She flies to the nearest old paling, tears off some fibres from the wood, reduces them to a pulp, and hastens back to the spot selected for the nest. This operation is repeated again and again, until she has formed a short *papier-mâche* stalactite from the roof. To the bottom end of this she attaches three small cells, and lays an egg in each. She next constructs a roof over them, and by-and-by makes more cells and lays eggs in them also. Meanwhile, the three first cells produce tiny grubs, which require to be carefully fed. They grow rapidly, head downwards, and as they grow, the walls of their cells are lengthened. At this stage the queen has a busy time; she works late and early, without having a moment to spare. Her duties are neither light nor few, as the chamber probably requires to be enlarged; the grubs want food; the material for the nest has to be conveyed, prepared, and built in, and all this must go on without interfering with the deposition of eggs. After a time, however, the elder grubs cease to be a concern; they give up feeding, spin a silken covering over their cells, and change into the perfect state in retirement. When they come forth they relieve the parent wasp of the heaviest part of her labours. She, therefore, always takes care that the first hatched shall be "workers."

Wasps, like bees, are divided into three classes, queens, or females, the males, and the workers. Queens are easily recognised, as they are larger and longer than the others. The males are less than the females, but larger than workers. They have no sting, they do no work, and when they have served their purpose, they die at the end of the season. The workers also die at the beginning of winter. They live for others, not for themselves, yet their industry certainly seems to be poorly rewarded. They are introduced into a nucleus of a nest, which they complete; they keep the colony in provisions; they feed the young, in fact they do everything, and die when it is done! Possibly they are resigned to their fate. One of their last actions would seem to indicate how fully alive they are to the evil days that draw nigh. At the end of the season they drag out any grubs that may be in the nest and leave them to perish quickly, to save them from a slower death. Then the entire population abandon their home for altogether. The males and workers having lived the full term

of their natural life, are seen no more; but a proportion of the queens will succeed in hiding themselves during winter, and emerge next spring to found fresh colonies. Thus a single wasp, killed in the early part of the year, represents a riddance of a thousand or two later on.

A wasps' nest is an extremely interesting object. Beginning at the top, the combs are arranged in a series of layers, each wider than the preceding, and divided by short pillars, so that the top of one series serves as a floor, which allows the wasps in to feed the grubs, that head-downwards, are contained in the terrace above. Nothing could be neater or more suitable than this arrangement; there is no space lost, and there is every convenience for getting at and feeding the young. The whole nest is enclosed in a thick paper case, which keeps out dirt, and also acts as a protection against enemies. As an increasing population requires that the chamber should be enlarged from time to time, the difficulty is got over by the inmates taking material from the inside of the paper shell, which is generally fully half an inch thick, and building it on the outside.

The wasps of one nest have been known to join a neighbouring swarm, stronger than themselves, perhaps for additional security. This is regarded as a voluntary, not a compulsory, union.

SEPTIMUS DUDLEY.

BY E. LYSAGHT.

CHAPTER I.

"THE ROYAL PANORAMA."

"I THOUGHT I had done with noise and worry," said Septimus Dudley, half aloud. "But I was mistaken! Life is nothing—nothing if not quiet! Look at them—listen to them! What a vile jumble of colours—what discord! And to think that they should have posted themselves and their abominable *thing* exactly opposite my windows!"

The "thing" thus apostrophized was "The Royal Panorama," or "The Magnificent and Unique Series of Views, representing the War in the Crimea, with vocal and instrumental accompaniment."

But this splendid affair, the advertisements of which had made all the dead walls in and about Little Island glorious with rainbow letters a foot high, was nothing more to the angry Mr. Dudley than "an abominable thing!" So you see "there are two sides to every question;" also, "one man's meat is another man's poison."

Septimus Dudley did not believe himself to be a selfish person, and yet—well, perhaps each one of us is selfish too; and certainly he did feel himself an injured man when he saw the glaring posters and heard the brass band exactly opposite his study windows.

A study and a studio at once. He had been in early life a surgeon in the Royal Navy, but had given up his profession and taken to the life of an amateur artist when the death of a relative left him in an independent position. An amateur he

certainly was, never likely to see his work accepted for the Royal Academy; for though he had taste and talent, and a real love for his art, his pretty sketches were not excellent enough.

"Why on earth you didn't stick to your profession," his old friends said when they visited him, "we can't imagine! Surely you would have had a busier and a more useful life; you, too, who always loved the sea, don't you remember?"

Any one who looked round on the walls of the studio would have known that the artist loved the sea. In calm weather or in stormy, with the dark waves breaking angrily against darker rocks or with a blue sky over bluer water, there you saw it. Mr. Dudley was never weary of that one subject, and shunned the land—or his pencil did—almost as much as a fish would.

His friends could, and did, see enough of marine views, on the walls or in his portfolio. But one picture they did not see—a mere rough sketch, done from memory, unfinished. It hung with its face to the wall. Two letters and a date—twenty years before this story opens—were pencilled on the canvas. Twenty years! A huge slice in a man's life! When he began that picture, a labour of love, he was only twenty-five. Now he is a middle-aged man, with plenty of silver in his hair, and a thin worn face. Once upon a time he had looked forward to a very different sort of life—to a home, not a solitary one. Now he was cynical and cross-grained, liking his own company best; charitable as far as mere almsgiving went, but not in the larger, better sense of the word, expecting little, asking little, from his fellow-men, looking with eyes of suspicion on those who meant to befriend him, as well as on strangers. He had shut himself up in his shell, whence he peeped out with cold and severe shrewdness, shrinking from all attempts to draw him forth.

"Why could they not take their wretched panorama somewhere else? Surely England is wide enough without coming to a place like this. No one but a fool could take pleasure in seeing yards of painted—Painted? No! daubed canvas, or in hearing a brass band, out of time and tune, murdering 'fine old English airs.'"

But Mr. Dudley was in the minority when he said this.

All Little Island to a man—with the one exception—meant to patronise "The Royal Panorama." Had it not been exhibited "before all the crowned heads of Europe?" or so the flaming posters said. The rector had gone to see it, taking his boys, the school children were going, even old Colonel Curry, the half-pay officer, who might be supposed to be a judge of military things, had openly declared that it was "very well done indeed," and that the performance deserved the support of the Little-islanders. But Mr. Dudley, pointing to the exaggerated and too highly coloured pictures on the dead walls, peevishly asked if it was possible that educated and reasonable creatures, with eyes and ears, could possibly see anything to admire in the impossible cavalry and gigantic infantry that the visitors to the "Royal Panorama" were called upon to behold. "You are too difficult to please," said the rector, who had spent a very satisfactory hour on the front seat, taking a genuine interest in the war pictures, from the landing in the Crimea to the taking of Sebastopol. "What you despise

so much, and disclaim against, has cost that poor man a good deal of money ; he lives by it honestly, works hard, too—supports his wife and children. I met him at the stationer's, and we had a little chat," added the clergyman, the kindest of mortals.

"I wish very much he took himself and his honest work out of this—do you mean to tell me the wretched thing is at all like real life?"

"Upon my word it isn't bad—it gives one an idea of battles and so forth—and they have some fair music, too."

"Music! what? the brass band? do you call that music?"

"Well, I declare I like it; they play with a good deal of spirit, and then there is some singing, too."

"Worse and worse."

"Not at all. I'm not much of a judge, to be sure, but there is a lad who seems to me to have a pretty voice, and he sang pretty songs too."

Mr. Dudley did not say that it was very easy to please the clergyman, he contented himself with a shrug of his shoulders.

"There is to be an evening performance to-night, under the patronage of the mayor," said the rector.

"And an end to my comfort!" replied Mr. Dudley savagely, "the evenings are so warm that one must have the windows open, and I can hear the band even when they are closed."

"Well, well," said his friend laughing; "why not change your rooms—your dining-room faces the other way?"

"And destroy my comfort, and upset all my arrangements, because a parcel of vagabonds—why? what are you looking so grave for? they are vagabonds—aren't they?"

"If you mean wanderers, that they certainly are; poor too—I fancy their treasury isn't over well filled; but once upon a time, a little more than eighteen hundred years ago, there were twelve poor men—wanderers too, some of them taken from what were then called low and disreputable callings—of whom the world was not worthy."

Mr. Dudley was silent, and presently the clergyman went away, thinking—

"Now if I wanted money for any charity—for one of these very performers on whom he is so hard, just because their proceedings, perfectly just and harmless, disturb his routine—he would give it without a grudge. For he is a good man, though living too much for and in himself."

Mr. Dudley, though silenced by the speech of his friend, was not put in a better or more congenial humour by it.

Yet it was an evening that should have softened his heart. All sorts of lovely lights and shades played on the old-fashioned houses, their windows—common prosaic glass at other times—caught the level beams of the setting sun, and were straightway changed into fair jewels.

The heavens were deep cloudless blue—there was a faint wind from the west, laden with the delicious scent of the limetrees and distant hay-fields.

From his easy chair, Mr. Dudley could see the market-house, in the upper room of which the Panorama—"that abominable Panorama"—was exhibited. Beyond that again, square and grey and old-fashioned, the little church with its circling belt of noble trees.

"The evening of all others to enjoy in peace," said he with a groan.

He loved to open his windows—with him plenty of fresh air was a necessity—and to be soothed by the gentle, softly blended sounds that were so far removed from noise.

The open window, the fresh air he had—but alas! exactly opposite was the market-house, from the windows of it unwonted light was streaming—unwonted music pealing!

The streets, generally so hushed and still (for the Little-islanders retired to their homes at an early hour, and stray dogs and vagrant cats were sharply looked after by the constable), echoed to the feet of the people, all hurrying to the Panorama, each one eager to secure a good seat. For small and remote as the little town was, its patriotism was warm and large-hearted. Many of the elder folk had had friends and relatives in the Crimean War; a few of them, now peacefully settled down in the autumn of their days, had actually worn the Queen's uniform and been under fire at Alma, Inkermann, or Sebastopol. Punctually at eight o'clock the performance began. The manager and proprietor, "Signor Moroni," as he was called in the advertisements, though he spoke very good English, with what (but for his Italian name) one should have called a London accent, explained each part as the picture slowly rolled past the spectators. There was a certain dash and spirit about the design and colouring, though, no doubt, a critical anatomist could have found many a fault in both, that drew loud applause from the crowd. The two wonderful cavalry charges at Balaklava (for there were two, one as daring, though hardly so hopeless, as the other). And here the orator was in his glory.

"This, ladies and gentlemen, is the famous Heavy Cavalry Charge. You perceive the magnificent Scots Greys, with the noble Iniskilling Dragoons. In this charge, General Scarlet—you perceive him to the right, leading on his men—lost his helmet, and rode on bare-headed."

Then, too, the picture of the more famous "Charge of the Six Hundred" was slowly unwound before the wondering, admiring eyes of the eager spectators. In some instances, to be sure, the difference between Hussar and Lancer was not sufficiently marked; while the overwhelming army of Russians appeared to be composed of men of superhuman magnitude, but what then? Only a few of those present had actually been in the Crimea, and these were not over-critical. There was a pause at this part of the programme.

Mr. Dudley, impatiently wondering when the whole thing should be over and the market-house and street left to its normal condition of peaceful silence, thought that this lull was a happy token, and that in a few moments the spectators would issue forth and betake themselves to their homes. But he was wrong in thinking so. At the very moment he was looking impatiently across the dark street to see the opening of the door and the subsequent release of the spectators, the signor was announcing to the latter that Mr. Paul Campbell, whose services he had been fortunate enough to secure, would recite "The Poet Laureate's ode on the Charge of the Light Brigade." Mr. Dudley could not hear the words of the poem, but he could hear the indistinct

murmur, and, immediately afterwards, the loud and enthusiastic applause that followed.

Also, he could hear the cry of "encore," "bravo," "encore," and with a pang of premonition born of the nervous horror of the moment, he felt that the request would be complied with. Looking at his watch, he said peevishly, "Half-past nine—I protest they mean to go on till midnight."

The next moment a very sweet voice made itself heard—Mr. Paul Campbell, instead of repeating "The Charge of the Six Hundred," had chosen to sing "Auld Lang Syne."

CHAPTER II.

OPENING AN OLD BOOK.

"THIS fellow, whoever he is, *can sing!*" said Mr. Dudley, listening in spite of himself. He could not choose but listen. The night was still, the sweet young voice clear and penetrating, the accompaniment was simple and well-chosen, consisting only of a flute. Gradually the solitary man drew closer to the open window, the harsh look upon his thin face grew soft and pensive, he beat time with his hand to the well-known melody. He was sorry, very sorry, when the sweet voice was lost in silence. He stood at the open window, vaguely longing to hear it once again. "Auld Lang Syne!" A simple song enough. His thoughts went back to the past. How often he had heard her sing it! With a voice clear and pathetic as that which had just died away; how often she had sung it—and now, her very name was never spoken by him. *Her name?* Had she not changed it long since, given up her love and her lover for mere money—"Ellen Martin" had long since been dead and buried, and "Ellen Vandersteen"—quite another woman—had no doubt forgotten Septimus Dudley.

"Is she dead or alive, I wonder?" he said to himself. "What a fool I am to think of her now—surely there must be something wrong with me, or the mere hearing of an old song could not bring the past so vividly before me? I daresay she has married again—if so, I hope that if she married for money a second time, she took care to keep her husband from speculating!" But the spell of that song and of that sweet young voice was upon him. He opened an old desk, on which the dust lay thickly, and took from it a book, old too, and faded. The first part was closely written in faded ink, the rest was blank. An old diary! of no use nor interest to any one but himself.

Slowly he turned over the pages, he sighed as he did so. "August 1st" (more than twenty years ago).—"Helen and I are engaged—she will wait for me—I am to make two more voyages and then— We shan't be rich; but that does not matter. I sail to-morrow—how pretty she looked, as she said 'Good-bye!' The same name occurred in another entry. "May 20th.—Home again! Nine long months away! No letter from my Helen, but she does not know that I have landed. In another day I shall see her—hear her speak—tell her how fondly I have remembered her. How absurdly happy I feel! How good God has been to me! How generous and kind everybody is! As for that poor young lad that I have just seen

in his mother's arms, one would have thought I had done wonders for him; shall I ever forget how she thanked me for what she called 'my goodness' to him! Helen will be pleased though when I show her the splendid ring that the kind lady insisted on my taking! What a good world it is after all, when for merely doing one's duty to a sick lad one is so rewarded! I say to myself, Septimus Dudley, you are a very happy man."

He sighed again as he read these words.

What a gulf existed between the writer of the diary and the Septimus Dudley who read its records!

A few pages further on there was yet again another mention of Helen.

"So there is no truth, no honesty, no love, in the heart of a woman! Helen is my Helen no longer. What has she done? Sold herself—given me up—married a rich man! It's no use saying I can't believe it—it is true! There is an end to everything. She says her parents wished her to take this step. So they have had their way. She is now Helen Vandersteen, a rich woman. She asks me to forgive her. Never, never! She has killed my trust in human nature; she has shown me that no one can be good and true. I shall never forgive her."

Those words, hard and bitter, wrung from the man's sore heart and written so many years ago, seemed to echo in his ears. Still further on, and two entries closed the record of his earlier life, with its short sweet dream and sudden awakening.

"February 4.—I have seen her. She held out her hand, and said, 'Let us be friends, Dr. Dudley.' So like a woman! As if I could forget. I hope I shall never see her again."

Poor Septimus Dudley! And yet he said his prayers, and asked for the forgiveness of Heaven, while he refused to pardon the creature who had made his life sad and lonely.

The last entry ran thus:

"Christmas-day.—I have just read in the *Times* that James Vandersteen, her husband, has lost heavily—speculation and the failure of a bank. So her golden dreams have come to a rude awakening. I have also heard that they have left for Australia. So I shall never see her again."

The rest of the pages were blank.

Shortly after the last entry had been written, he had left his profession, and settled down in quiet Little Island, an old man for his years, something of a cynic, disliking society, and shunning it. He could have found work—the wholesome work that is a blessing in itself—but he cared to undertake private practice, but from the time of his arrival at Little Island he dropped his professional prefix, and plainly announced that he by no means meant to interfere with the resident physician, Dr. Antony.

"If I were married," he said, "if there were others dependent on me, I might think it my duty to go into harness again; but as it is, rest and solitude are all I want. Dr. Antony is young and strong; he is welcome to all the practice and the patients too."

But it was not of Dr. Antony or the Little-islanders, sick or well, that he was thinking of that night.

The panorama was over; the crowd had slowly dispersed; the old market-house was wrapped

in shadow, saving where the lovely pure moonlight touched its grey roof with living silver.

The sweet young voice was silent. Nothing troubled the restful air, only the sound of the river that once upon a time encircled the town—hence its name—and that now flows placidly by on one side of it. In the dark cloudless sky the star-flowers were blossoming, the windows of the houses opposite Mr. Dudley's house were blank and dark. The little world of Little Island was sound asleep. It was long past midnight when he went to bed, and his dreams were of the past, when he had been young and happy, and when he had faith in man and woman.

A sweet young voice and an old song—how was it that they had had such influence over the man's spirit? How was it that they had gently unbound the fetters of custom and led the mind back to the old days when Septimus Dudley was poor and unfriended, but when he was ready to thank God day and night for his happy lot?

Their influence was strong enough at least to prevent him from openly grumbling again at the posters, or the brass band, or the noise of the crowd as it went to and from the Panorama, although "owing the unprecedented success of the entertainment" Signor Moroni announced that he would prolong his stay for a week.

Mr. Dudley listened at his open window hoping to hear the same fresh voice that had charmed his critical ear, but he was disappointed. He did not know that the signor came forward and made a little speech to the effect that "he regretted that Mr. Paul Campbell could not, in consequence of severe illness, appear that night."

But he was to see Mr. Paul Campbell very soon.

Sitting at his late breakfast the next morning—he was not an epicure, yet liked his toast crisp, his fish delicately fried, his new laid eggs boiled to a second—an early visitor appeared.

"At breakfast! Well, you are a late man!" said the rector.

"Have you breakfasted? Let me give you something?" said Mr. Dudley.

"My dear sir, I breakfasted two hours since. I came to ask you to do me a favour."

Mr. Dudley felt for his purse. Some poor widow or other object of charity, no doubt; and not being an avaricious man, and knowing that the easiest way of getting rid of his visitor was to subscribe at once, he was about to produce it when the rector said hastily, "Stop—it's no collection—I want you to visit a patient."

"My dear sir, that is out of my line now. I've given up practising, send for Dr. Antony."

"He's away—I did go to him," said the clergyman (and Mr. Dudley could not help feeling the distinction between "sending for" and "going to" a man). "He can't be back till to-morrow; he thought his patients were all doing well, and could wait for him—so they are—this poor lad only got dangerously ill last night, or at least his friends did not know how ill he was."

"Well, there's another man at Paddington—let them send for him."

"Paddington! ten miles off—you are on the spot—come, Dudley, I know you will come."

"I don't see it!" and Mr. Dudley looked obstinate, "If I were to run about like that, I'd offend Dr. Antony, and never have any peace."

"The night cometh when no man can work," said the rector.

Mr. Dudley felt the implied rebuke; his tone was a little softened as he said: "You are a good fellow, parson, but I've made a rule not to interfere with my professional brethren—well, where are you going?"

"Going to get somebody to go to Paddington!" said the rector, taking up his hat.

"Stop; who is the lad?"

"A stranger here, poor, with no friends, except the proprietor of the Panorama and his wife."

"Oh! one of that lot, eh?"

"One of that lot—exactly—brain fever, or what looks like it."

"Nonsense! Probably he has been sitting up late, perhaps drinking."

"Wrong; I hear the lad is steady, and a water-drinker, but as you won't come, good-day," and the clergyman made for the door.

"Stop a moment. I suppose I must go; all the same, I do wish he had waited to get ill till he was away from this."

It was on the tip of the rector's tongue to say that people did not get ill to please themselves, or when they chose, but he was wisely silent.

Wisely, too, he took no apparent notice of Mr. Dudley's discontent and grudging assent.

"Where is this patient of yours?" said the latter, with a cross accentuation of the possessive pronoun.

"Lodging at the Widow Percy's—his name is Paul Campbell."

Down a narrow street, on which the sun was blazing, in which there was no shade before noon, they went, stopping at the Widow Percy's small house. She kept a stationer's shop, a big grey cat basked in the window, flanked on either side by a scarlet geranium.

"What a place for anybody in fever," thought Mr. Dudley—his old professional instinct awaking.

"Upstairs, please sir," said the widow, coming out of the little shop. "The signor is with him now."

Steep were the stairs; very small, very hot, though clean, was the front room into which Mr. Dudley and the rector walked softly.

A tall man, grey-headed and stooped, sat by the bed, and looked up with relieved joy as he saw the new comers.

Mr. Dudley looked at the lad—looked at the rose-red cheeks, the lips withdrawn from the teeth, the half-opened eyes.

"Yes, brain-fever," he said.

"I thought so, sir," said the signor sadly.

"Poor fellow! is he in danger, sir?"

"Any one in brain-fever is," said Mr. Dudley. "Somebody must watch him night and day."

"My wife sat up last night with him, sir," said the signor, who, poor man, looked weary enough himself. "She has gone to lie down for a bit. I suppose we had best write to his mother?"

"Certainly. I see you have ice—good thought—who got that?"

"I did, sir," said the signor. "I fancied it was good in cases like this, and I got it at the fishmongers. If we could only keep the room cool."

The rector looked at his watch. "I must be off to my school," he whispered; "but I shall look in again—if there is anything wanted"—in a very low tone to Mr. Dudley—"let me know."

CHAPTER III.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

DOCTOR ANTONY came home, and to him Mr. Dudley would at once have handed over the patient; but the case was so serious, such constant care and attendance were necessary, that in common charity the latter had to consent to co-operate with his brother physician. His interest was excited, his energy aroused, as day by day the battle for life or death was fought in that little upper chamber.

Doctor Antony, his hands full of other professional work, was glad to let Mr. Dudley take the lion's share of attending on this patient. The poor lad knew no one.

"His mother"—for whom he called incessantly in his delirium—"will be here to-morrow," said the signor.

Mr. Dudley did not much care about *that*—for Madame Maroni was the best and kindest of nurses—still, it was likely to be a long illness, and one woman could not attend him single-handed.

As for the signor, though he had two performances each day, he managed somehow to spend a good deal of time with the sick lad. "He has been with us only a month—with his voice he ought to do better, for, as you may imagine, neither he nor I make a fortune by the Panorama, though I have taken great pains with it too," with a sigh.

The poor signor! Mr. Dudley learnt that he was no Italian at all; an honest Irishman, Morony being his real name.

"I was educated as an artist," the poor man said, with a blush, "but I suppose I wasn't good enough. I'd have starved before I made a name, and though I suppose painting scenes for the Panorama, and going about with it is not what I once looked forward to, yet I am thankful to be able to earn my living. I have two lads at school—we lost one—that is the reason, I think, that my wife is so sorry for this poor fellow."

"You have been very good to him," said Mr. Dudley, not without a pang of something like self-reproach; he, to be sure, spent a good deal of time with the patient; it was an interesting case to be remembered—one with distinct peculiarities, but he knew that the sick lad did not cost him the loss of an hour's sleep or ten minutes' impunctionality at his dainty meals.

While the poor signor, after exhibiting and reciting, and explaining at the Panorama for two hours, would be ready to take his turn at watching the patient.

His wife, too, was as good as or better than her husband. Her hands fashioned and put in its place the curtain that kept out some of the sunshine, and applied cooling lotions on the ever restless head.

"After all, though, this lad was in a manner one of themselves, and so of course they look after him," said Mr. Dudley to himself, when conscience held up to him a mirror in which he saw his own lazy, self-indulgent life contrasted with the hard-worked existence of these good Samaritans who seemed never to think of themselves at all.

But the explanation sounded feeble and false even to his own consciousness, and he absolutely lay awake uncomfortably till midnight, trying to think of something else, and failing.

"If the mother does not come to-morrow, we must get a nurse," he thought, for the Panorama, the signor, and madame must leave Little Island on the following day.

And before he slept, conscience with her small still voice had whispered in his ear that he, who had plenty of money and little to do with it, could and should hold out a helping hand by meeting the expense of the nurse.

The rain was falling heavily the next morning, as, with waterproof and umbrella, he went to visit his patient. "I shall catch my death of cold," he thought peevishly.

He passed the old market-house. At the door a red van, laden to the top, was being packed with the immense canvas and machinery of the Panorama.

The signor, in his working clothes and without the splendid waistcoat and pin with which he always appeared before his audience, came forward with a bow, Mr. Dudley not being one to encourage a comparative stranger to offer a hand-shake.

"Well, sir, we are off, bag and baggage. The lad's mother came by the night mail, and that is a good thing. I'm sure I don't know how we could have left him else; and yet we are due at Brentford at noon to-morrow."

"Oh! if she has come, it's all right, as you say—he's mending. I think the return of consciousness a good sign."

The signor's pale cheeks flushed with a gratified red.

"That's good news, sir, very good;" then with a little hesitation, and in a lower voice, "I'm glad I met you, sir. I wanted to say—about your fee, doctor; anything in reason I'd like to pay. I can give you my address, if you will drop me a line; his mother, I'm sure, is very poor, and he's a good lad."

It was Mr. Dudley's turn to get red now.

"Don't think of that," he said, "it is out of the question. I take no fee. I should not, even were he rich. I do not practice now; this is an exceptional case; money is out of the question." And as he spoke a sudden impulse, that belonged surely to the Septimus Dudley of long ago, rather than to the selfish middle-aged hermit, prompted him to hold out his hand to the signor.

"No," he said, "nothing of the kind; but you may depend on my looking after him, and of course the mother will write to you about him."

Then the signor went back to his van, and Mr. Dudley went on his way to visit his patient.

The day, wet and close, was dark too, and when he climbed up the stairs to the sick lad's room, all was in shadow.

The curtain hung across the window. The lad lay asleep, his head resting on the outstretched arm of a woman who knelt by the bed.

She looked up, and made a warning gesture with her disengaged hand, for sleep meant healing.

Mr. Dudley came gently forward, and raised the curtain a little, so that he could see the lad's face, then he looked from it to that other face so like it, but pale and sad, and framed in the formal cap of widowhood.

"Helen!" he said, under his breath.

Was he awake or dreaming? The woman never stirred—her sick lad above everything!—but a lovely flush stole into her face, and her eyes fell before his.

He stole round, and placed a hand on her arm.
"It is Helen, and is he your son? He calls himself Campbell."

"He is my only child," she whispered; "all I have in the world."

"The only son of his mother, and she was a widow!"

Eighteen hundred years ago those few words told a pitiful story. But Helen's son did not die.

"How is it that he called himself Campbell?" asked Mr. Dudley.

"Poor boy! pride, I think; he did not wish his friends to know about him. But oh! he's good; the best son in the world."

Another time Septimus Dudley would have laughed sardonically at this exaggeration; he did not laugh now.

"She is less changed than I am," he thought. "Her hair has a little grey in it, and she is pale and thin, but she is as lovely as ever."

Poor Helen! Heavy and grievous her troubles had been. Mr. Vandersteen, a ruined speculator, had died suddenly—an overdose of opium—whether intentional or not was never known.

The boy, taken from school (because there were no friends to pay for him), tried to help his mother by attaching himself to the Panorama. The signor knew of the assumed name, but, never guessing what interest attached to the other name, did not think of mentioning it to Mr. Dudley.

The corner being once turned, the lad's recovery was assured.

"He will soon be able to travel?" said his mother.

"I hope so—I think so—" said Mr. Dudley; thinking also: "Before he goes I must speak to Helen."

But Mrs. Vandersteen, guessing something of his intention, quietly frustrated it.

"He does not forget the past," she said to herself, "and I, too, remember it; but when we are away from this, we—that is, I—shall fall out of his life as if we had never come back to it."

She was sensitive and proud. So, on a fine, sunny morning, when Mr. Dudley knocked at the door, he was met by the Widow Percy.

"They are gone, sir," she said.

"Gone?—where?—when?"

"Last night, sir—I think to London—but Mrs. Vandersteen left this for you."

"This" was a little parcel and a little letter.

In the first a very handsome ring. A fine brilliant, encircled with rubies—poor Helen's last ornament.

The letter was very short.

"Dear friend," it said. "Saying good-bye, and for ever, is hard, but it is easier to write it. How am I to thank you for your goodness to my boy? I can only pray for you. Keep the enclosed for his sake and mine. I wish it were better worth keeping. Don't think me unkind or ungrateful because I leave without seeing you again. God bless you and keep you in happiness. Your friend always, Helen Vandersteen."

He could not, and did not, know what tears that letter had caused her. Helen Vandersteen, recognizing the obligation she was under to her former lover, shrank from the renewal of their acquaintanceship.

"He is rich—he does not need my friendship—

he will be relieved when we are once more lost to him."

And she was the more bent upon this course, because she knew that those meetings by her boy's sick-bed had shown her how true and sterling was the one over which time and circumstances had encrusted a rough and uncomely covering. "He is the same—I only am altered!" And so she deliberately severed the newly formed ties, and left no clue, no trace, by which Septimus Dudley could follow her. Her boy was restored to her—she should live for him. She counted over her little stock of money; with care she could go with him to the south, not to London; the sea air would be good for him.

Then, when he should be strong and well, she would nerve herself to enter into the battle of life again, with and for him!

So mother and son went to West Haven.

"A gentleman to see you, ma'am!"

Helen looked up with a word of warning, for Paul, still weak, lay asleep on the sofa.

"Don't be afraid, I shan't waken him. Are you glad to see me, Helen?"

It was Septimus Dudley! He sat down by her, and took her thin hand in his.

"By chance I found out where you had gone to; now, Helen, I must tell you something, and ask you a question."

That question, asked and answered, changed his life, and made the autumn of his days bright and calm. They were quietly married, and went back to their quiet home at Little Island.

Paul was to have his day-dream realized; Mr. Dudley sent him, first to a private tutor's, then to Oxford.

Mr. Dudley took no fees; did not clash with his professional brother, but was ready to help the sick, day or night.

Slowly and surely happiness flowed into his life—just as the autumn weather was full of radiance and heat, that seemed to have borrowed their light and warmth from the past season—so he thanked Heaven that had changed "the winter of his discontent" into an "Indian Summer."

FROM MY PORTFOLIO.

BY ROBERT STEGGALL.

A SEASIDE sketch, taken one afternoon
Last summer, on the coast of Normandy,
How plain and instantly it conjures up
The scene itself before me! Here am I
(And whoso lists may come and gaze on, too),
Here on this emerald height, which hastens down,
As fain to meet its yonder *vis-à-vis*,
Descending also, and more headlong still,
Towards the village nested in between,
Once more within my nook, regarding all:
Lo! to the left, from where the wandering edge
Of sequent scallops, each a little bay,
Makes a green margin to the azure sea,
The headland ever rises in a range
Of rounded hillocks, at the utmost top
Crowned with pied cattle standing out so clear,
So motionless, recumbent or erect,
Against the pure blue sky, they well might be

But models only—save that now and then
They bellow, as for pastime or in dream,
Or with no other humour than to list
The answering echo. See, how the milk-white
goats,

To all besides indifferent, keep right on,
Nibbling their endless meal; nor overlook
Yon dusky creature of ignoble fame—
Though worthy of a better as the best—
The patient piteous ass, who, heedless all
Of outrage past or future, wisely takes
The boon of ease and plenty of the hour.
Below, the crescent beach; one half thereof
(The other hidden by the slope) besewn
With smacks and cobbles of the fishermen,
Them hauling up, with creaking round and round,
Each to its separate capstan, and with song,
That lightens labour to a make-believe
Of pastime sport itself—song rather guess'd
Than hearken'd, thus remote, where faintest
sound,

Despite the stillness, fails to reach the ear—
Nor vain their arduous toil, for oft have I
Watch'd the long billows break upon the shore,
Each roller a Niagara!—even now,
Whiffed but gently by the breeze, the offing
Is flecked with foam far off as eye may ken,
As Neptune there were holding grand review
Of his trooped Tritons, with a pageantry
Not often witnessed in a hundred years!
Column on column open and deploy,
Form, defile, and off wander various ways,
Then prance with streaming pennons to the
strand,
To break in halting ease.

The town—a village, save in flattering name—
Lies hidden at our feet, except yon sparse
And glowing villas that so sun themselves
The livelong summer halfway up the slope,
Each in its pleasure, and about whose base
Soft curls a filmy azure from below.
Naught higher, save that Chapel at the top—
Up whither by what desultory ways,
Some as at timorous distance from the brink,
Others so near, as bent on gazing o'er,
Down the sheer strata of the precipice,
Those zigzag pathlets lead!—a toy-like shrine,
Albert to hearts sea-weary, wafting home,
Glad landmark many a league; of suppliants
there,

Within its miniature precinct, less than fewer
Than twenty leave but scanty room for more;
Along the walls, and from the rafter'd roof
Dependant, hang ex-voto offerings,
Pictures and model ships, and images
Of patron saints, and curious nameless things,
By homeward-bound rough toilers of the deep
Brought from afar as dedicatory gifts
To Holy Virgin, Guide-star of the sea.
Once, as I pondered in the hallowed place,
Before me knelt a shepherd, who had left,
For just few moments interval of peace,
His nibbling charge hard by; his head low-bow'd,
His knees well-nigh as threadbare as the flags
They bent upon, and either poor stark heel
Slipped from its cruel *sabot*, stuffed with straw!
Ah! fain, methought, him viewing thus beguiled,
Had I for those rough shoes exchanged my own,
And gone forth, glad, to tend his harmless sheep,
If with the transfer it had only been

For him to yield me of his simple faith,
More than all riches and more worth than all
The world can give beside!—
Naught else beyond, save where the bluff descends,
And thrusts a white arm out into the sea,
Arch-wise, so best the picture to complete;
For there it ends, and nothing more remains,
Except some slighted detail here and there:
First, yonder little bird, perched on the tip
Of golden gorse, and swaying to and fro,
Fearless, or glad, of our proximity,
The while he trills his ditty of delight;
Dotted about the beach move living men—
What specks they seem! What atoms, each to
hold

Within the tiny specklet of its eye,
And as existing for none else beside,
This rounded glory of sea, earth and air!
Yet very truth withal; for 'tis the light
Or darkness there of each particular soul
That to one's vision makes it what it seems,
And to no twain alike—else would there be
Throughout all generations no such thing
As individuality. And lo!
How, striving to outstrip the clouds themselves,
Their trackless shadows down the hillside run,
To float upon the sea, the while, near shore,
Slow swirls that white-winged seamew, round and
round,
As 'twere a vagrant flecklet of the foam,
Blown upward and held buoyant by the breeze.

I fain had shown the valley, which for miles
And miles of ever-varying loveliness,
Winds inwards from the sea, but that it lies
Hidden of yonder intervening hill;
Still, I have made thereof a picture too,
And, haply, were not otherwise than glad
To bring it forth hereafter, if so be
My friends, on this one gazing, cared to see.

THREE OFFERS.

BY E. CHILTON,
Author of "Wade's Daughter," &c.

CHAPTER X.

SEVEN YEARS AFTER.

"*A M I* very much changed, Timp?" Once again, as on the happy evening of that happy day long ago, Cicely was looking critically at her own face in the glass; sitting idle, for a wonder, at her dressing-table—her cheek, a little thinner than it used to be, resting upon her hand, her eyes, graver and more earnest, gazing, not only upon those reflected eyes, but into depths beyond—far away regions whither Timpkins, coming, at her question, briskly up behind her, could not penetrate.

Seven long years had rolled away since that summer night; in a few weeks it would be seven years since Cicely left her home—that fair home which once had filled her heart and her life, but which now appeared to her as a beautiful dream gone by, sometimes half forgotten amid the stern realities of the present.

She was an important person now, the girl who

then—half child, half butterfly—had known no more arduous pursuits than those of gathering roses in the gardens of Wilcroft, and of arranging them to the best advantage in its luxurious rooms. For the past year, having attained her ambition of a first-class certificate, she had reigned supreme as head mistress of the schools of her apprenticeship: queen of a little world whose population had now increased to some two hundred girls and infants, with an army of pupil teachers, partly lightening, partly increasing, her cares. She was Miss Fenwick, of The Schools: an object of respectful awe to many; to herself, when she looked back, a wonder; only to Timpkins still a darling child, to be petted, whenever possible, as of yore.

"Changed, my deary? Why should you be changed? Unless, indeed, from toiling and slaving after them dirty little sweeps."

"Have you forgotten that I was twenty-five last week, Timpy?"

"Forgotten! No, indeed. What's twenty-five? When you come to fifty-six, now, there's a difference! As I remarks to sister—'Sister,' I says, 'it's no use furbishing; you was fifty-nine years old last January, and fifty-nine—or more—you appears; and them coloured cap-bows only makes your skin show yellower.' And me, I'm fifty-six; but years of work in me yet. Sister, poor thing, she was but a sickly piece at the best o' times! But as for you, Miss Cicely," cried Timpkins, with sudden animation, "there's not one bit of change, unless for the better, from what you was when we came away on the sly, as it were—me evading Mr. Jones and all the assembly of 'em—and took up our poor quarters here. You was eighteen then, my deary, and eighteen you looks now. Not one day more; and so me and sister agreed, when your birthday was, last week."

Cicely rose, smiling.

"I suspect you would say much the same in twenty-five years more, if you and I were still together," she said, kissing her old nurse. Then she went downstairs, and out into the street.

It was summer again, and a holiday; the first day, indeed, of a week's holiday, granted to recruit exhausted nature after the visit of H.M. inspector. The sky was just as blue, where the smoke did not hide it, as the sky of seven years before. Here and there, as Cicely walked slowly past the houses, odours of mignonette, from some blackened windowsill, brought memories of those scented gardens where she had loved to ramble on just such summer days long ago.

By-and-by, in a mile or so, the streets widened; she entered a more suburban quarter; presently turning through some iron gates, which opened upon a kind of park devoted to the people. Here a fountain—poor indeed, and meagre, but still a fountain—played; here bands—of the militia or volunteers—performed on special occasions; here were shady trees, and grass-plots, with seats in convenient places; and upon one of these seats Cicely, tired by her walk in the hot sun, was glad to rest.

Her book lay unopened on her lap; her thoughts were far away. Among the sweet acacia blossoms in the tree above her, bees were humming as they had hummed of yore; a scent of heliotrope from the neighbouring flower borders increased her realization of the past.

"When I shut my eyes, I am sitting on that

old step on the terrace at Wilcroft; it is such a lovely day, and everything is so happy. Grand-papa is dozing in the library, with the windows wide open; and they have just begun hay in the home meadow. And I hear some one coming along the terrace—yes, I remember! he was coming to-day to luncheon."

She opened her eyes again, and sighed. How vivid the fancy had been! It was a fancy only, and yet—that step, sharp and firm, was a real step. She leaned a little back, under the shade of her dark parasol. Some one passed without seeing her, along the gravel path, a few yards from her seat. Cicely drew a long breath. How wonderful! Was it his spirit? or he himself—Kenneth Egmont—the hero of her girlhood?

Yes, how wonderful that he should pass just then! What was he doing at Halbury? All these seven years she had never seen him, had never heard his name. Almost hating him, as she thought, at first, in spite of his apparent repentance, she had wondered how he came to be so often in her mind: seldom a whole day out of it; and in dreams constantly returning. Now she had seen him in reality; and with that glimpse a whole world of feelings, which she had believed to be dead long ago, awoke, like the Sleeping Beauty's courtiers, and filled Cicely's heart once more.

How long she remained seated upon that iron bench, the bees humming in the acacia flowers overhead, she could not have told. When at last she arose and went back, the familiar streets seemed no longer familiar, but new, and full of expectation. At every corner her heart throbbed, her face flushed. Whom might she meet suddenly? Would he know her? Surely she was not so much changed as that he should not know her! But would he care for it, now?

Timpkins was on the threshold, looking out for her.

"Why, missy! sister was afraid you had been taken ill, and couldn't get home. Go in and rest yourself," she added, throwing open the door of Cicely's little parlour, which, in these summer days, it was the business of Timpkin's life to keep cool.

"Thank you, Timpy. Timpy, I want you. Shut the door, and come here. I have seen—"

"Yes? Yes, my deary? What is it?"

For the staid Miss Fenwick had burst into a girlish flood of tears.

"Oh, never mind! How silly I am!" she sobbed, when she could speak. "Don't take any notice of me. I'm only hindering you, Timpy."

"But, missy, what have you seen?"

"Oh, nothing—at least—perhaps I'll tell you some day. I don't feel up to talking now, dear Timpy. I'll lie down a little, and read."

"You're overdone by them sweeps, that's what it is," said Timpy, with a flying shake of the sofa cushions, as she hurried in quest of some lemonade which she had concocted for Cicely's refreshment.

"Now you sip this, and rest, missy, or you won't be fit for Mrs. Wynter."

"Mrs. Wynter! I had forgotten. Timpy, I don't think I can go."

"Not go, my deary! And you never seeing your equals, except there, from month's end to month's end! Certain, undoubtedly, you'll go, Miss Cicely. You just get a bit of a nap, and I'll sew them bows on your dress, and lay it out all ready."

CHAPTER XL
AGAIN!

Mrs. WYNTER was the good-natured wife of one of the Members for Halbury—a rich manufacturer, who resided in the town, and took an active interest in its affairs—those of the schools not least, being chairman of their committee. As Member, he kept open house, and his wife was famous for her kindly patronage of obscure or neglected merit. Cicely had long been one of her special favourites, frequently invited to the *omnium gatherum* parties in which Mrs. Wynter's heart delighted. It was not so frequently that Cicely could, or would, accept these invitations; but the change of scene and of society refreshed her; and to this particular night she had looked forward as to a mental glass of champagne after the worries of the inspection.

But now as, escorted by Timpkins, she set forth in the cool evening air, she would have given much to stay quietly at home—there to indulge in peace the multitude of thoughts and memories awakened by that unexpected vision. Half in a dream, at Mr. Wynter's door, she parted from her old nurse, and mingled with the motley crowd assembling in the richly furnished rooms.

"That's right, my dear Miss Fenwick," said her hostess, bearing down upon her, stout and benignant; "so good of you to come!" and she pressed Cicely's hand. "And how have you got through the dreadful day? Oh, how glad you must be that it is over! Now, before I forget, come with me; here is a lady who wants a mistress for her voluntary school, and it struck me whether that favourite pupil teacher of yours, that interesting Jessie, might—but you shall talk it over. Come, my dear! Lady Anne," still holding Cicely's hand, "this is Miss Fenwick. Miss Fenwick, Lady Anne Linton."

Lady Anne Linton! The self-possessed school-mistress made her mechanical little bow, and stood passive; prepared, if not recognized, to discuss her pupil teacher, and retire. She would not, she must not, give way. In another moment, perhaps, yet another meeting might require all her powers of control.

"My dear Cicely!"

Lady Anne seized her hand—actually kissed her; she had never kissed her in the old days.

"My dear child, can it be you? I had no idea! So this was your plan! Do sit down, and tell me all about it."

Tears were difficult then to be restrained; but Cicely was well schooled. She sat down, still passive—in Lady Anne's eyes, strangely cold—and answered all questions.

"I thought it the best way," she said. "My old life had to be undone; I wished to break off all connexion with it."

"But we were so much grieved that you should hide yourself! We all felt so anxious about you! However, I am very glad that you have done so well."

She paused, and looked Cicely all over—half interested, half puzzled—a little hurt too, that the girl whom she would once have been so glad to befriend, should thus frigidly receive her advances. She was just Miss Fenwick, the head mistress, neither more nor less. And they were soon in a business-like manner discussing the merits of the pupil teacher.

This matter settled, and an interview arranged, Lady Anne's attention was claimed elsewhere. She crossed the room to join another friend. And then the moment came. Had he been watching for it? He was standing before her; he whom, for seven years, she had seen only in dreams.

"Miss Fenwick, have you forgotten me?"

Did his tone tremble just a little? or was it her fancy? She looked up.

There was the face which once she had thought so beautiful—the same, yet not the same. That strange indefinable impress, which the heightening and deepening of the spirit-life within seldom fails to leave without, was upon it. Whether she herself were changed or no, undoubtedly Kenneth Egmont was changed. He looked as if he had suffered—had worked hard—had conquered—and come out into steadfastness and strength. It was her ideal face realized! Cicely's heart gave a wild throb of joy, and of something deeper than joy, as she looked up into it,

"No, I have not forgotten you," she said mechanically.

"How do you do, Miss Fenwick? I am particularly glad to have met you; it will save me a walk to-morrow morning. May I beg the favour of a few words?"

The speaker was one of the school managers, a Halbury magnate, who had yesterday been present at the inspection, and wished to discuss alterations then recommended. His few words meant an hour at least, Cicely knew. And in an hour Timpkins would call for her. She resigned herself with all outward politeness, unaware of the indignant glance inspired by the old gentleman's superior tone. She saw only that Mr. Egmont turned away, and that Mr. Robertson took Lady Anne's seat at her side.

But presently she saw something more. She was listening dutifully to Mr. Robertson, even answering his remarks by various practical suggestions, thus increasing his lofty admiration for this deserving mistress. But all the while she knew what went on in a neighbouring group. How pretty Rose Wynter, just come out, was looking—what a fascinating little manner she had—how attractive she was making herself to Mr. Egmont, to the discomfiture of various gentlemen who hung about her unable to get in a word.

"There is nothing on earth so lovely as a young girl," Cicely found herself inwardly remarking. Rose Wynter was eighteen; exactly her own age seven years ago! And she was—Miss Fenwick of The Schools.

"Oh, Timpy, I am so tired! I can't talk," she said, when Timpkins, out in the starlight, began to question her.

"My poor deary! I don't wonder. I've no patience with them aggravating inspectors."

So Cicely was left to her own musings.

She had not spoken to Kenneth Egmont again. She had fancied, indeed, that when Mr. Robertson left her, he had made a slight movement—but this might have been mere fancy—in her direction. And Mrs. Wynter had at that instant asked him to take some lady down to supper, and he was carried away. She herself had refused supper, and had escaped; her faithful Timpy was waiting.

"Perhaps I shall never see him any more, in this world, unless—unless he married Rose Wynter," thought Cicely.

At last she was alone, and in her bed! The

darkness was like a friend. Her heart ached; had she ever, amid all her troubles, known such terrible heartache before? It found relief, after a time, in passionate tears; their cause she could not have explained.

CHAPTER XII.

REUNION.

"No, sir, indeed. My young lady is altogether too tired. I couldn't answer for it to my conscience, sir. If you'll please to leave your card, in the afternoon she may feel better up to company. But at present, sir, I am quite sure—"

The window was wide open in Cicely's little sitting room, behind the cool green blind. She could hear every word, as Timpkins argued with some unexpected visitor. Only a few hours before she had awokened, full of shame at her weakness of the previous night.

"I was forgetting," she had thought, "I was a foolish girl once more. But to-day I am brave and strong again. The past is a dream. My work is my life now."

Yet some familiar tone, in the low voice answering Timpkins, had brought all the foolishness back! She had started suddenly to her feet, her eyes shining, her face in a glow.

"If you please, Miss Cicely," said Timpkins, entering on tiptoe, her eyebrows positively wild, her black rolls vibrating in sympathy, "he won't take no denial. He doesn't wish to force himself on you, he says, but he will have it from your own lips. Am I to let him in, or am I not?"

Cicely took the card from her old nurse's hand.

"Mr. Kenneth Egmont."

It seemed to her like a voice from beyond a long-closed grave. She did not speak.

"Don't have nothing to do with him, my dear," whispered Timpkins, coming nearer; "just you remember the trick he served you before. What does he want, I'd like to know, a-raking up old insults? Let me say you're too tired to see any one; and there'll be an end of the matter."

But Cicely did not hear. She was summoning all her self-control for perfect outward composure.

"Tell Mr. Egmont that I can see him, if he wishes it," she said.

* * * * *

"Cicely; seven years! It was Jacob's time, and if you won't believe me, even yet, I am ready to serve another seven. You said repentance must be tested—surely mine has been. May I tell you? Will you listen?"

"I am listening," said Cicely calmly.

She stood a little apart from him, her hands folded, a strange dreamy light in her eyes. He had not thought her beautiful, much as he had loved her, in the vanished years. But he thought her beautiful now.

"I never forgot your words. I did not know where you were gone, or whether we should ever meet again. But I resolved that if I could not marry you, I would marry no one at all; and then I began to get ready. I sold my commission, and paid as much as possible of my debts; and I went to an old cousin of ours, a bauker, who had offered me work before. I had always despised him and his business—more shame for me!—and he had given me up as hopelessly idle, but at last he was

persuaded, and what I owe to him I cannot say in words. Now, for the last six months, he has taken me into partnership. I can offer you a home, if you will come to it. I can give you back at least something of what you lost seven years ago. That has been my dream, my hope, my aim, through all this weary time. Cicely, cannot you believe me now?"

"Do you know all about me?" said Cicely; "that I am a national schoolmistress?"

He glanced at her half reproachfully.

"Of course I know, and the splendid work you are doing. I have heard all that through Mrs. Wynter. For several years I knew only that you were somewhere with Timpkins. I did not try then to find out where, lest I should be tempted to go to you before the time. A month or two ago, in London, I met Mrs. Wynter at my aunt's house, and in the course of conversation I heard her speak of a Miss Fenwick. My aunt did not recognize the name, but it was always in my mind; and what I had heard made me at least hope the truth. My aunt is staying with Mrs. Wynter for a day or two on her way to the north, and I contrived to come to Halbury at the same time—called on her at Mrs. Wynter's, and was asked to the party last night. I had found out that you would be there. Now you know everything. But what is the good of my going on? If you cannot believe me—if you don't care—"

He paused and looked at Cicely, his eyes full of restless pain.

"Cicely, if it is only that you don't believe me, I repeat I am ready to go back—yes, for seven years more. But if you do not care—"

His voice broke off suddenly.

"Perhaps there is some one else?"

"No," said Cicely, still self-control.

"And you have forgiven me?"

"I told you that long ago."

"You believe in me?"

"I cannot help believing in you—now."

"Then, why—why?—Oh, Cicely, you might have loved me once!"

He drew nearer to her, he clasped her hand; and the seven years' mist rolled away.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW LIFE.

"AND how fortunate has all turned out for poor sister, my deary! 'Sister,' I says, 'I hope it 'ull break you of your complainings. The forethought as Providence has expended on you! Mary Anne wanting to have you just as you was ready to go!' For stayed with her here myself, missy, in no possibility could I, while you was alive, and in a home of your own. So long as I've a body in this world, with you I must be, and in your service."

"Dearest Timp, you know how grateful I am to you, though I couldn't have taken you, indeed, if Mrs. Walker had been left here alone. But as it is, we are free to be happy, every one of us, at least to-day."

For this was Cicely's wedding-day. The wedding-bells were ringing, the sun was shining, and the bride and bridegroom were going forth into their new world—a world of love and work; of work and love, and the tears of the past had cleansed their sight to behold its glory.

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THE WHIRLIGIG OF TIME.

BY H. E. CLARKE.

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CHAPTER L

"MAN PROPOSES."

HE was a gawky, awkward hobbledehoy of eighteen, and she was a self-possessed, lovely young lady a year or so younger. He was sketching, seated on a log by the roadside, and she came quietly behind him and looked over his shoulder.

"You are getting on very well," she observed. He started violently and dropped his brush. "Good gracious, Miss Carmichael!" he exclaimed, rising in much agitation.

"Now, don't let me interrupt your painting," said the young lady, seating herself calmly on the log at his side, a proceeding which caused him to blush painfully, and to drop once more the brush he had just picked up. Miss Carmichael watched him meanwhile with an expression of demure enjoyment, which may have been caused by the inspection of his half-finished sketch.

"But how is it that you are so far from home, and all alone too?" he asked, in perplexity.

"Oh, I um not alone," she replied. "Father was sent for to see poor old Mrs. Evans, at Smith's Farm. She is not expected to live many hours; and so I walked up with him. He is in the cottage now. But I didn't expect to meet you. What an enthusiast you must be! Do you intend to be a painter?"

"Yes," he said, "but I cannot get father to agree to it yet."

He was gradually getting cooler, but she could see that his hand shook a little, and that the brush he was pretending to use was dry.

"You sketch beautifully," she exclaimed, with emphatic admiration.

"No," he replied, shaking his head, "I don't

make half the progress I should if I had some one to advise me. I've got the ideas, and I can see what I want to do; but my hands are so infamously clumsy and slow."

"You sketch better than anybody I know," returned Miss Carmichael, "and you took the drawing-prize at Elmslie amongst seventy boys."

"That's not much to be proud of," he said, rather contemptuously. "Not half-a-dozen of them knew or cared anything about it, or looked upon it as anything but a bore. But I went to a picture-gallery or two as I came through London from Elmslie the last time, and there I saw things that make me feel absolutely ill with envy when I think of them. Just the effects that I smear and smudge and blot and blur hour after hour to get, done with two twirls of a brush as easily and certainly as I write my name."

"You are so ambitious," said the girl; "you can't expect to equal men who have spent their lives at the easel."

"I don't expect it at present," he replied; "but I mean to do it one of these days if my clumsy hands don't stop me."

His shyness had quite worn off by this time, and he looked as much at ease as a youth of his awkward age can ever do.

"I must go and see if father is ready," said Miss Carmichael, rising; "I suppose you will not forget that you have to give me my lesson tonight?"

"It is not very likely that I shall forget that," he replied with great meaning. Then he blushed again, because, on consideration, the remark seemed fatuous, and he was not sure that the ghost of a smile had not flitted across his companion's face.

"Good-bye, Mr. Newton," she said sedately, holding up her dress to trip over the log, and to show a very neat foot and ankle. He bowed, but the spectacle had rendered him speechless, and when he recovered the use of his senses, Miss Carmichael had tripped out of sight. As the light and joy of the summer landscape appeared to have departed with her, he put up his brushes,

and prepared to follow. Before going, however, he found a small tassel which had fallen off some part of Miss Carmichael's dress, and this he kissed vigorously, and then, in accordance with precedent, placed it beneath his waistcoat. He knew that heroes invariably put this species of treasure-trove "into their breasts." But it would have been better for him to trust to the more prosaic pocket in this case, for his tassel slipped down his clothes as he walked, and at length came out at his boot top, and was lost in the road.

Tom Newton had been Lord Lancaster's valet for fifteen years, and when Tom hinted that he was thinking of getting married, his lordship left no stone unturned to induce him to alter his decision. But it was of no use, because Tom was hard hit; so Lord Lancaster, like a fine old English gentleman, as he was, made his favourite a handsome present, and promised that Tom's first boy should be educated at his expense. Tom went to live amongst his wife's relations in the country, and in due time a son was born unto him, who turned out to be his only child. Lord Lancaster was as good as his word, and from the age of twelve to the age of seventeen Keith Newton was kept at a good boarding-school at his lordship's charges.

Then he came home, having, as old Tom told everybody, "finished his education;" and his father found himself face to face with a very pretty problem, namely, what on earth to do with him?

Tom had saved a hundred pounds or so, and his idea was that Keith should be apprenticed to a grocer in Sydney, and afterwards set up in business for himself.

Keith could not be induced to listen to this proposal, nor could his father be prevailed upon to entertain his counter proposition, that he should go up to London to study painting.

"I've earned my money hard enough," said old Tom grimly, "and I'm not going to chuck it away on such trumpery."

So there was a complete deadlock, and the young man, whose education was finished, did nothing but play the organ at the parish church on Sundays, and wander about the country sketching and fishing for the rest of the week.

Lily Carmichael, the vicar's daughter, had never been away from her father for more than a day at a time, since her mother died, when she was quite young, and now she was on the verge of sweet seventeen. The vicar was entirely wrapped up in a great work, he was writing on Church history, and Lily did pretty much as she pleased. It was natural enough that she should take an interest in the clever young organist, who was so much better read, and so much more intelligent than the farmers' sons of the neighbourhood, who looked down upon him, and called him a lackey behind his back. For Lily was aware that she came of a good old family, and she looked down upon the farmers' sons with quite as much contempt as they upon Keith Newton.

It was natural enough, too, that she should desire to learn to play the organ, in order to assist her father in his services, and, indeed, the old man was quite charmed with his daughter's thoughtfulness, when she asked his permission to take lessons of Keith Newton. He only stipulated that Mrs. Everett, an aged retainer of the family, should be present during the periods of instruc-

tion, and then congratulated himself upon his superhuman sagacity and foresight; which, as the old lady was very deaf, three-quarters blind, and wholly stupid, was to say the least of it, rather premature.

So the lessons became an established institution, and Keith very soon got to look upon them as the only bright patches in the sombre texture of the week.

Poor Keith! Nobody thought of sending anyone to protect him, and yet he was in much the greater danger of the two. It is not probable that Lily had what are called "designs" upon the unfortunate boy. Out of novels it is extremely rare for people to have designs. The astutest are most likely those who watch which way the cat of circumstance jumps, and take their cue from it with a grave face, as though the leap had been made under their sole direction.

But Lily was a woman, and her life was on the whole singularly dull, and Keith amused her with his shy rough schoolboy ways and strange enthusiasm. Why should she deny herself that amusement out of a prudish fear that he might ultimately fall in love with her?

So she lent him books, and made fun with him of the Sydney clod-hoppers, and interested herself in his sketching.

And Keith, who knew no more of the world than any other schoolboy, speedily convinced himself that he had only to screw his courage to the sticking place, make known the state of his feelings, and receive an assurance from Lily that her condition was much the same.

Walking home that summer afternoon he decided within himself that the time was fully come for him to make the plunge. That very evening in the organ-loft he would tell Lily that he loved her. He had been on the point of doing so once or twice before, but his heart had failed him; now he would consider this unexpected meeting a signal that the hour had struck, and a portent of good luck.

When he came downstairs after tea his mother noticed that he had on his Sunday clothes, but she did not say anything to him, as he was apt to be angry if remarks were made. He had given his boots an extra polish too, and he plucked a flower from the little front garden as he went out, and put it in his button-hole.

Later on that evening the vicar was sitting at the top of his library steps, with his head nearly touching the ceiling, and deeply engrossed in a thick folio, when his daughter entered the room hastily.

"Come down, pa!" she exclaimed with tragic emphasis.

"Directly, my dear," responded the vicar without moving.

"Come down now, pa," reiterated Lily, "I've something awful to tell you."

"I don't know what the man means," said the vicar fretfully, "I must write to Pollock. There's no such passage as Bland refers to in his commentary, and yet Pollock maintains—By the way my dear," he broke off suddenly, "my Index Rerum has disappeared since last night, and is nowhere to be found." He craned forward to say this in a tone of the utmost importance, looking as though he expected that the news might be too much for his daughter to bear.

"Keith Newton has had the impudence to propose to me this evening, pa," cried Lily, unable to contain herself longer.

"Propose?" queried the vicar in a perplexed way; "what did he propose, my dear?"

"Marriage!" shrieked Lily in desperation; "what else should he propose?"

The folio fell to the ground with a resounding thump, and the vicar followed it in one bound.

"Thank heaven," he exclaimed, clasping it in both arms, "it is uninjured. But really, Lily, you should be more careful.—Propose to you, did he?" he repeated absently; "where was Mrs. Everett?"

"Fast asleep in one of the high-backed pews as usual," replied Lily scornfully.

"Hah!" said the vicar, still nursing his beloved folio. "He shouldn't have done it. It was great presumption."

"So I told him," said Lily, nodding; "I gave him such a talking to as he won't forget very soon."

"That was right," said the vicar; "that's what he wanted. What did you say?"

"I said that I was surprised and shocked at his ingratitude and presumption; that it was clear he had no idea of the difference in our social positions, and that it would be a lesson to me for the future never to associate in any way with persons of a much inferior rank in life. And then I said that if his father had not known his place better than that, he would not have been Lord Lancaster's valet for fifteen years."

"Dear—dear—dear," said the vicar in a low tone; "you were very severe with the poor fellow. But perhaps it was as well; he shouldn't have done it. I must speak to his father. Old Tom will be shocked I am sure. He has very proper feelings—very proper feelings indeed."

When the vicar unfolded his tale next day, old Tom was at first furious, and when the unfortunate Keith appeared began to storm at him. But the vicar, than whom no more tender-hearted man ever existed, felt his soul melt with compassion as he beheld the boy's absolute misery, and at his intercession old Tom at length agreed to let the matter drop. But of course in a village like Sydney, such an incident as this could not long be kept secret, and when the details gradually oozed out, Keith's life became a burden to him. The farmers' sons took the opportunity of revenging themselves upon him for being better educated and more intelligent than they. He was afraid to go out into the streets until after dark, because the little boys followed him, hooting and shouting, and he knew that all Sydney was laughing at him. The vicar alone of all people laboured to show him kindness, but this was rather more intolerable to the unhappy youth than the insults of the others.

CHAPTER II.

A GREAT LADY.

A WEEK or so after Keith's unfortunate proposal, the Vicar received a visit from his sister, Mrs. Saltire, widow of the American millionaire of that name. She was a highly vigorous and energetic lady, of a little over forty, and she could not marry

without losing her fortune. The principal feminine safety-valve being thus closed in her case, her superabundant energy was liable, at times, to explode in eccentric directions.

The Vicar stood rather in awe of his sister, and she stood in awe of no living creature except a mouse or a black-beetle. She sat in the Vicarage drawing-room on the evening of her arrival, a portly and wonderfully beringed, beribboned and bejewelled figure—handsome, but in rather a masculine way—and preached to the Vicar as she had been used to preach to him, and to most other people, all her life.

"Lily seems very much moped, and no wonder, poor child," she began. "Why don't you let me take her back to London, Frank? It would do her all the good in the world."

No, no," stammered the vicar, nervously. "She is too young at present, Maria. She has great need of a father's observant care."

"A father's fiddlestick!" interjected Mrs. Saltire. "Why, Frank, you spend your life in that mouldy old library, and she might be married three or four times over before you would know anything about it."

"Maria," said the old man in a beseeching tone, "don't say such shocking things. I assure you I take every possible precaution. I lock the garden gate myself every night, and when she goes out I always inquire where she went, and whom she saw. I don't see what more a man can do."

Mrs. Saltire laughed, and said, as if talking to a third person, "poor old Frank!—he was always like that. That's what it is to get a double first, or whatever they call it, and then stick yourself in a wretched swamp like this to write a work on the Fathers."

"I know," she added, turning to the vicar, "you won't let me take her away, Frank, because you are afraid she should never come back, or should get engaged, or something, but you are wrong."

"My dear Maria," said the vicar anxiously, "You are mistaken, I assure you; but she is very young, and she is all I have. In a few years I shall be very glad to accept your kind offer, but not at present."

"No, I knew you wouldn't," replied his sister, nodding, "but meantime if something or other doesn't happen I shall die of boredom."

"Why, I thought," said the vicar in surprise, "that your time was quite taken up with these geniuses of yours."

"Even you can be satirical about them," replied the lady in a mortified tone, "and no wonder," she added after a gloomy pause. "Frank, they have turned out failures—dead failures one and all."

"What became of the most consummate metrist since Milton?" asked the vicar.

"He calls himself the Lion Comique, and sings at Music halls."

"And the second Mozart?"

"He stole three of my best silver spoons."

"And the soul-stirring orator?"

"He joined the Salvation Army, and then ran away with a female captain, who happened to be married to somebody else."

"Dear—dear," murmured the vicar, "how very sad." But the corners of his mouth twitched rather oddly.

"Yes, you haven't heard the worst yet," said Mrs. Saltire. "There were Vincen the dynamiter, and Sharpe the anarchist—two of the pleasantest young men it was ever my lot to meet, and marvellously accomplished. They borrowed two hundred pounds of me, to be spent in the promulgation of their views, and then went into partnership and set up as tobacconists in the City Road with the money. The business was not a success, and so they burnt down the shop to get the insurance, but they were detected, and are now undergoing seven years penal servitude."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said the vicar, rubbing his hands.

"Yes, but it seems such a pity," replied his sister. "They were such promising young men, they might have reformed society. Frank, I am sick of life. I would go into a convent for two-pence."

"You wouldn't like it," said the vicar. "A conspiracy of some sort would suit you better." There was a short pause, and then he proceeded, with some hesitation of manner, "You don't happen then, Maria, to—er—have—in point of fact—a—er—vacancy for another genius just now?"

Mrs. Saltire stared at the speaker with unconcealed amazement.

"There's something I don't understand in this," she said at last. "Either you are developing latent tendencies to persiflage—"

"Nothing can be further from my thoughts, my dear Maria," protested the vicar.

"So I should have said," replied his sister. "But if not, you have some ulterior motive in making these affectionate inquiries after my failures. You are mysterious—you are, in fact, absolutely bursting with some secret, which you think you desire to conceal. Frank, you are very much more interesting than I expected to find you, and considering the place you live in, it does you infinite credit."

The vicar was silent, and looked confused. He began to think that deception was more difficult than he had been led to suppose. After a few moments obviously spent in cudgelling his brains severely, he was ready, however, with a brand new theory of his conduct, which, considered as an impromptu, was not without merit.

"It is only," he said, "that I am anxious about the future of the very respectable young fellow who plays our organ on Sundays. If he has not a decided talent for landscape painting I am very much mistaken."

Mrs. Saltire looked disappointed.

"It doesn't sound very promising," she said. "Geniuses seldom play the organ in church, and they are never respectable."

"But he doesn't play at all well," explained the vicar eagerly; "and his father was a nobleman's valet."

"That is better certainly," said Mrs. Saltire; "but to tell you the truth, Frank, I'm getting a little weary of genius. However, let me see some of his work. I suppose you have some in the house?"

"Um—yes," replied the unhappy vicar, once more on thorns. "That is—no—I don't know—I believe Lily—I am sure Lily has a picture or two—"

"She won't be in bed yet," said Mrs. Saltire; "I'll go up and ask her where they are."

"No—no—no—on no account," exclaimed the vicar in anguish. "I'll see if I can find them—I think I can—I am sure I could if I only knew where she had put them."

"Frank Carmichael," cried Mrs. Saltire tragically, "you are trying to deceive me, and you are making an idiot of yourself. Now what on earth is the mystery—?"

Suddenly she stopped and perused the vicar's blushing and shame-faced countenance as if a light were breaking upon her mind.

"Great heavens!" she said slowly at last; "he wants to marry Lily."

"You have marvellous perceptive powers," exclaimed the vicar; "the faculty amounts almost to divination in you. In olden times—"

"Never mind olden times," interrupted his sister, "why on earth didn't you tell me this at once instead of beating about the bush, all this while?"

"I knew you would laugh," said the vicar, "and I knew you would blame me, and want to have Lily sent away. But I can't part with her now—I can't indeed."

"You are a silly man," said his sister with severity; "his impudence is much the best symptom in the case so far. You don't deserve to be helped after trying to mislead me in that Machiavellian way. But you've spoilt your brains with books, and we must make allowances for you. I don't suppose your precious organist can paint, but I daresay I can get him out of the way without much trouble."

But when at last the sketches were discovered and produced, Mrs. Saltire changed her tone. Through her gold double eye-glasses she surveyed each with the eye of a connoisseur, only muttering at times disjointed phrases such as: "Most curious—very extraordinary—I should never have believed it," and so on.

She selected three sketches and put them aside, and then turning to the vicar said—

"Well, Frank, I'm inclined to think you have made a discovery. I will take these three sketches and show them to Clifford, the Royal Academician, when I get to London. We will hear what he thinks of them before doing anything more. It would be a strange thing, Frank, if I were to discover a real genius in a place like this, after failing over and over again in London."

CHAPTER III.

CASTLE BELLAMY.

LORD and Lady Bellamy were entertaining a distinguished party of visitors at Castle Bellamy, and on a certain lovely September day the Castle and grounds were nearly deserted, because the gentlemen had all gone shooting, and the ladies were at a bazaar in the village.

Little Lady Jane, a pretty child of six years old, was showing her doll the gold-fish in the fountain basin on the lawn, and happening to raise her head, saw one of the sportsmen striding rapidly across the park in the direction of the Castle. He entered the garden by the wicket gate, and then took the broad gravel walk, which would lead him past the fountain to the French

window of the library. A handsome man, with a strong bushy beard and long moustache, an erect square-shouldered, firm-stepping athlete, but with the forehead and eyes of a man who thought.

The little girl stepped gravely down from the fountain, wrapping her doll more warmly in its shawl because it had a very delicate chest, and proceeded to meet him.

"Ah Lady Jane, Lady Jane," said he, shaking his finger at her, "you are trifling with my affection. You did not meet me this morning as you promised."

"No," said the child, "but it wasn't my fault. I had to do my lessons. I will meet you to-morrow if you like. But why are you back so soon?"

"I have a letter to write," replied he, "and I didn't know till an hour ago that the post left so early here."

"It must be a very important letter," remarked the child meditatively. "Father would not leave his shooting to write a letter," she added with conviction; "he hates it—and so do I. We both think it an awful nuisance."

By this time they had reached the library windows. "How long shall you be?" asked Lady Jane.

"Half an hour," was the reply.

"I will show you our new gold-fish when you come out again," said Lady Jane with dignity. The sportsman thanked her suitably, and stepping into the library closed the window behind him, and even as he did so, he had a glimpse of a lady sitting reading under the mulberry tree to his left. There was nothing wonderful in that—doubtless the lady was Lady Jane's governess, and yet though he had only a vague idea of a rather graceful figure bending over a book, an indefinable thrill went through him, as if he had seen a ghost.

He sat fully ten minutes thinking before he commenced his letter, but when his pen once began to go his face cleared, and he was soon absorbed in his occupation.

He finished his letter, stamped it, and put it in the box in the hall, and then returned to the library for his hat.

Lady Jane was watching him anxiously, with her nose pressed flat against the glass of the window. When he came out she said, "You have been more than half an hour, I think. Now I will show you our new gold-fish. Hardy brought them yesterday in a large jug. Hardy is our head gardener. One of them is very ill, and if it dies I am going to dig a grave and bury it." The visitor cast a hasty glance towards the mulberry tree, but the seat under it was empty.

After inspecting the gold-fish, Lady Jane, who had taken her companion entirely under her protection, being obviously of opinion that he was not fit to be left alone, suggested a row on the lake. The boat was a large one with an awning in the stern, and they both got in and shoved off before they found they were not alone.

"Dearme," whispered Lady Jane, confidentially, "here is my governess;" and then aloud she introduced Miss Carmichael to Mr. Keith Newton. So they met again after ten years. Keith was cool enough, but Lily's agitation was painful to witness. She turned pale to the lips, and her attempted reply to his careless remark about the weather was a total failure.

Keith pulled leisurely into the middle of the lake, chatting with Lady Jane, and having, to all appearance, forgotten the governess altogether; but under his hat-brim, tilted to keep the sun off, he shot, every now and then, arrow-like glances.

She had seen trouble; her pride was broken; the heyday of her beauty was over; her youth was gone; and she was a governess. He was a Royal Academician—the most successful painter of the day, and earning more money than he knew what to do with. Scarcely yet in his prime, and with the world at his feet. And he was aware that if he proposed that very night to Miss Sydenham, the great heiress at present staying at Castle Bellamy, he would be accepted; he had not decided whether he would do it or not, at present, but he could not help reflecting that a beautiful epigrammatic finish would thereby be added to the irony of Fate. To coolly take the greatest prize of the season, the prize that the very flower of marriageable England was fighting for, under the eyes of the woman who had scorned and insulted him—this would be revenge indeed.

"What are you smiling at?" asked Lady Jane, abruptly; and Keith saw the governess shrink as if she had been struck.

The situation was too painful to be prolonged; he rowed into the bank and they landed. Lily bowed, or tried to bow, and then fairly fled. Lady Jane, finding that her companion was not taking as much notice of her as she deemed necessary, went off in silent disgust, and Keith was left alone. He lighted a cigar, and sat down to think. He was not, on the whole, very much surprised to find that Lily had come down in the world; he had deemed this not unlikely ever since Mrs. Saltire had given up her fortune to marry a missionary and go with him to China. And there is no disguising the fact that the inscrutable decrees of Providence had, in this instance, his full and complete approbation. She had been pitiless as only a woman is ever pitiless, and Nemesis had overtaken her. Nemesis had merely performed an evident duty, and there was an end of the matter so far as Keith was concerned. He only wished she had looked a trifle stronger, because in that case a sneaking feeling of pity for her would not have spoiled, as it did now to a certain extent, his docile acquiescence in Fate's dealings.

He threw away the end of his cigar, and went off to have five o'clock tea with the ladies.

Clare Sydenham, a magnificent blonde, tall and straight enough for a grenadier, was brilliant and gracious. Under the influence of her splendid vitality, Lily and her troubles vanished from his mind like pale mists before the sun. He decided that he would propose that very night, and in the conservatory, after dinner, he did it, and was accepted.

"But don't say anything about it to-night," said Miss Sydenham. "They are all sleepy and tired, and their congratulations will be frightful."

So Keith stole a kiss, and then plunged into the cool, dark garden, for he was too excited to return the drawing-room. To hold a Clare Sydenham in your arms even for the merest fraction of a minute is a most tumultuous amusement, and makes your blood dance to the strangest tunes.

He wandered about in the odorous gloom with

flying pulses, but at length the deep peace of the silent September night took effect, and he grew calmer. He thought he would go and see the moonlight on the lake, and repeat some poetry.

As he came in sight of the water he stopped for a moment, struck with the beauty of the scene. The boat remained where he had moored it that afternoon, and all was very still. He began to cast about for a poem that would do, but he seemed to be able to think of nothing but the swan on still St. Mary's lake, floating double—swan and shadow—and that didn't satisfy him, because there was nothing about love in it.

All at once he started; he could have sworn that he saw the black bows of the boat—floating double like the swan—first quiver, and then move forward. It must have been an optical illusion; he rubbed his eyes and waited. In another moment the boat was quickly pushed from land, and a woman, now standing upright in it, calmly threw off her shawl and her hat, and raised her arms above her head.

"Stop!" he cried, running forward; "stop! Miss Carmichael, what are you doing?"

At the first sound of the unexpected voice the white figure collapsed into a mere heap of clothes in the bottom of the boat.

Keith, without a moment's hesitation, waded in, seized the gunwale, and dragged the boat to land.

Miss Carmichael had fainted, and he lifted her out, and laid her on the grass. Then he filled his hat with water and dashed it in her face, under which heroic treatment she speedily revived. She looked wildly at him, wildly at the lake, wildly at the moon, and then buried her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

He thought this was probably good for her, so he did not interfere for some time, but at last getting bored, he sat down beside her, and said a few unmeaning things in a coaxing way, as a man usually does to a woman when she is crying. But the effect upon Lily was the reverse of soothing.

"Why didn't you let me drown myself?" she asked passionately. "What right had you to interfere? You have always been my evil genius. Why do you come here to gloat over my misfortune?"

"You are talking rubbish," remarked Keith, "I interfered because I questioned whether you had any really adequate reason for drowning yourself—but I am open to conviction."

"You are laughing at me now," she exclaimed with vehemence, "you were laughing at me in the boat this afternoon. O my God," she wailed breaking off suddenly, "if I only had one friend in the world."

"I am ready to be your friend," he replied quietly.

"You!" she cried with ringing scorn, "you who came here to triumph over me——"

"Not at all," he interrupted, "I came here to get some shooting. I had no idea where you were until this afternoon."

"I attribute all my misfortunes to you," she continued. "I was wantonly cruel to you I know that—but I was only a child, and it was all your own fault—and—and I have never had a day's peace since."

"On the other hand," he said, "I attribute all

my success to you. I should never have worked as I did if you had not stung me to the quick, and put me on my mettle. You were too hard upon me no doubt, but it did me good, and I thank you. It is a long while ago now, why not shake hands and be friends?"

She was silent for a moment; then she said in an altered tone, "I wonder if that is true? But no," she resumed, "you are only trying to pacify me as if I were a child. I do not believe you."

"At all events," he said, "you had better go in now, or your absence will be noticed. There is my card, and whenever you are really in need of a friend you will find one at that address whatever you may think."

She was quiet now except for a sob now and then; her passion seemed to have spent itself; and they walked together towards the Castle.

"I will not come in with you," he said when they were near; "I will take another turn in the garden. Good-night." He held out his hand, and after a moment's hesitation she took it. "You may depend upon me," he said, "remember that;" and they parted.

It was late before he went in, but he heard voices in the smoking-room as he passed the door. He did not feel inclined for conversation, however, and besides he was wet, so he went straight to bed, though the incidents of the evening had been too exciting to allow him much chance of going to sleep in a reasonable time.

He tossed about for hours, and as a consequence overslept himself considerably in the morning. When he entered the breakfast-room it was deserted by everybody except Lady Bellamy, who was reading the newspaper.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Newton," she exclaimed, "I have been waiting for you. You haven't heard the news? No, I knew you hadn't. We were all quite dumb-founded this morning when we heard it. We thought you were the lucky man."

Keith Newton's face was absolutely void of expression when he turned it towards the lady, but somewhere about the epigastric regions he had a feeling of dire and nameless discomfort. What on earth was coming?

"Clare Sydenham is engaged to Harry Dalrymple—what do you think of that?"

He didn't know what he thought of it, or indeed if he thought at all. He sat gazing at a piece of toast in his fingers, and wondering how it got there.

"You don't even seem surprised," said Lady Bellamy in a mortified tone; "ah, you men are strange! I was so sure you were the favourite, too! I was quite annoyed when I was told about it this morning, because I hate to be wrong in things like that."

"How did it all happen?" asked Keith finding his tongue at last.

"Why that's the curious part of it," replied Lady Bellamy; "you were with Clare you know for some time in the conservatory, and I made certain that you were proposing to her then. She came back alone, looking rather excited I thought, and I concluded it was all over happily. She didn't seem to be able to settle, which was after all only natural, and in about ten minutes she whispered me that she was going into the garden because she had a headache. My idea was that she was going to meet you, and I smiled what I

intended for a meaning smile, which I really thought she seemed to understand. She was gone so long, however, that people began to ask what had become of her, and at last Harry Dalrymple volunteered to go in search of her. According to his account he found her sitting by the lake alone, and at once went down on his knees, and was accepted. Now you know as much as I do."

"And a trifle more," was Keith's inward comment. "I am not a marrying man, Lady Bellamy," he said aloud, with really a very decent show of indifference. "I hope they will be very happy." Then he found that inexplicable piece of toast in his waistcoat-pocket, which quite stupefied him for the time, and would probably have brought him to grief, if Lady Bellamy had not been called away at the same moment.

So Clare had found him with the governess; had at once jumped to the conclusion that he was playing her false, and had taken her revenge. There was room for suspicion certainly, but her action had been hasty to say the least of it. On the whole, however, after the first shock he did not find himself so much disturbed as he expected. It seemed he was to be unlucky in his love affairs, but he had arrived at an age when railing against Fate has ceased to soothe, and when failure in any one direction, instead of at once suggesting thoughts of suicide, only prompts to fresh effort in another.

He went and smoked a quiet pipe under the mulberry-tree, and made a few cutting remarks to himself about women and their ways. The wondrous piece of toast created a diversion by tumbling out of his pocket-handkerchief, and he carefully buried it, and felt much better when it was gone. He determined that he would face the lovers and congratulate them, though his first thought had been of flight; and in the evening he performed this difficult task with such complete success that Clare could have killed him on the spot with the greatest pleasure.

As this would have been ill-bred, however, she proceeded in a different way.

Next morning Keith started for London, being driven to the nearest station in one of the Castle carriages. On the platform he was surprised to see Lily Carmichael keeping pathetic watch over one small trunk. She had evidently been crying, and he had a quick intuition of further mischief afoot at sight of her. Fearful of alarming her, he retreated hastily before she had seen him, and she was not aware of his presence until he sat down opposite her in a third-class carriage.

Keith was a singularly adroit man, and he put out all his powers during this journey, with the result that they had not gone very far before he discovered that Lily had been dismissed that morning at an hour's notice, and that Lady Bellamy had merely remarked that she did not consider any one who met gentlemen in the garden after dark was fit to have charge of a young girl.

"A man is a fool to fight a woman," he thought. "She can never be taught to hit fair;" but he said nothing, and shortly afterwards turned the conversation by inquiring about the vicar. The poor old man had been dead some years, and his library and the unfinished Church History were all he had to leave his daughter. The former was found to be worth little, and the latter nothing. Lily had become accustomed to the sad little history,

and told it without perceptible emotion; but Keith was visibly affected. He did not know until years after that this little incident won Lily's heart more than all his elaborate tact had done.

They were friends before the journey's end was reached, and a few days later Keith obtained for Lily, without any difficulty, the place of companion to an invalid lady whom he knew, and then he left England for six months.

When he returned two things happened: he married Lily, and Miss Sydenham, having jilted Dalrymple in the most matter-of-course way, married Dick Carton of the Guards. They say she leads the poor fellow rather a rough life of it, too.

THE CLUB WALKS.

"THE Club Walks." What a strange sound the words will certainly have in all ears except west country ears, and what extraordinary ideas will perhaps be called up by them. One, as he reads them, will, it may be, have a vision of some well-known club being compelled by the force of most unaccountable circumstances to take a walk down Piccadilly, portly old gentlemen, newspapers, waiters, bottles, glasses and all. Another, of a more romantic turn, may come to the conclusion that the words allude to some mysterious phantom club, in a haunted manor house, which nightly traverses the long corridors, borne by the ghost of some martial ancestor of the family. A third may have a hazy notion that the subject in question may have reference to some custom with regard to the club carried by the chief of a warlike tribe of North American Indians. A thousand other improbable, impossible conjectures and guesses may be made by those who read for the first time the words "the Club Walks;" but, unless they have been west country born and bred, they will find it hard enough to hit upon the solution of the riddle. The matter will be further complicated in their minds by their hearing the words, if they are in the west country itself, thus spoken, with vast gravity and emphasis, "the Club walketh."

Now let us enter a west country village on the day preceding the one concerning which the words are in every mouth and in every house, while every face, from the old granny down to the baby, wears an expression of unutterable excitement and profound earnestness.

"The Club walketh to-morrow at twelve."

The matrons are scrubbing, and rubbing, and scouring every object in the house, from their husband's boots to their children's heads, with an intensity of will which seems to warrant the supposition that some witch, who was once a washer-woman, has cast a spell upon the parish, and as witches are commonplace beings enough in the west country, this might be the case; the lads are standing before every available fragment of looking-glass, arranging ties of the most marvellous hues, or twining stag's horn moss around their best hats; the girls are in a chronic state of giggle and blushing, and pass most of their time with their heads in a box searching for untold finery; the children are careering hither and thither in a condition of wild, triumphant, royal

mischief, that sets the grimmest schoolboard coolly at defiance.

The most remarkable thing, however, in the whole village is the vast profusion of flowers which we see on all sides ; there are flowers in the hands of every one you meet, flowers laughing out of every window, flowers stopping up the doorways, flowers displacing the plates on the dresser, they overspread the table, and cause the whole family to eat their supper, standing, on the chimney-piece, they bury the baby in the cradle. Another object to be observed in every house is a very long pole, which has a senseless, useless appearance enough as we see it lank and straight as it is this evening, but which will play a distinguished part to-morrow.

But now let us hasten on to this grand morrow itself, for we have no more time to linger on its eve. Now we shall find out what those magic words mean ; "the Club Walketh !" This morning the village street is lined with standings, on which are displayed vast piles of sweets and gingerbread, that look as if they must be the embodiment of a school-boy's nightmare dream ; strange and fearful wooden animals, which may be meant for either horse, or dog, or for both in one, but which, nevertheless, to judge by the many pairs of little bright eyes that are already gazing admiringly at them, are very dear to the youthful minds of the parish, and sparkling gilded marvels in the shape of tiny bracelets and necklets, trinkets which look fit to adorn a fairy princess, but which are all to be bought for a penny each, including a wonderful watch, which actually has hands and will tick as well as ever grandmother's clock did in its life.

As noon draws near, the appointed hour for the important event, the village street begins to be ornamented with yet prettier things than those which the standings can show ; these are the faces of all the womankind of the parish. There are sweet faces of budding girls all running over with smiles that play from eye to lip, from lip to brow, maturer faces beaming with the deep moon-like tenderness of motherhood, faces that are lined with care, but yet still comely to-day because the happiness of the hour has brought them unwonted sunshine. How is it that there does not appear a single male figure among the petticoats ? Wait a little while, and perhaps you may find, with your own eyes, an answer to the question.

What are those two sounds which reach our ears simultaneously, coming however from different directions ? One is the mellow tone of the church bell, the other is a strain of music. Is there then going to be some grand ritualistic service here to-day ? you ask a little confusedly, recollecting, as you do, the righteous puritan horror expressed yesterday, by the old church-warden, against such abominations of popery. Yes, there is going to be a service, and moreover a procession, and it will actually be led by no less a person than the church-warden himself.

And now the words, "They be a-coming," are on the tongue of every woman in the street. The music grows louder and louder till it swells into a march, played by a brass band with vigour certainly, and with full attention to "the fortissimos," although the "pianos" might possibly be a little better remembered with good effect. There is a flash of varied brilliant tints far off as if a flock of gaily painted foreign birds had pitched

lately in the neighbourhood, and were flying towards us with their gorgeous plumes glowing in the June sunshine ; next we perceive that the birds have turned into a forest of flowers which are coming marching along the road. After that we see that the flowers, tied at the top of the long poles which yesterday we noticed in all the houses, are being borne aloft by a fine stalwart band of fellows, who now pass by us with much simple, manly pride in their bearing, while the village brass band, making music with all its might, brings up the rear. With many a nod and smile from the women and girls they go onward and file into the church, where the clergyman is waiting for them, and where there follows a short, impressive service, ending with a sermon suitable for the occasion.

Here then is the interpretation of those mysterious words "the Club Walketh." In most of our west country villages the men have a benefit club, which is paid into monthly, and which proves a rare friend in time of sickness or accident, and every year, in the bright summer months, every village club has its own special festival, which is kept as a holiday by the whole parish, and often draws visitors from many of the neighbouring parishes round. This procession of the club through the village which we have just been describing, and which always takes place on such occasions, is called in west country phrase "the Club Walking."

The church service being ended, the whole club are next seen seated at a long table in a tent that is pitched in a sunny meadow. A table which, in spite of its being nearly midsummer, and the thermometer at a height in the shade which we fear to mention, is covered with downright Christmas fare : first, joint after joint of roast beef, and then plum-pudding after plum-pudding. A west country man does not understand any other kind of food being set before him at a festive meal be the season what it may ; he would look blacker than the clouds which hang over Exmoor in December, if any less solid bill of fare were proposed to him. Healths are drunk, and much cider is consumed, and the guests rise from table well satisfied.

When dinner is over, the women and children consider that their share begins in the day's pleasure in good earnest. The meadow is turned into an arena for every kind of sylvan sport to suit all ages, and on one side sturdy wrestlers are contending, and on another winsome, tiny maidens are forming an elfin ring ; the old grannies sit by and nod their heads, and wink, and gossip, the grown up boys and girls do a little quiet flirting in corners. The middle-aged fathers of families, the club proper, now that all the grave business of the day is over, in the two events of the club-walking and club-dining, stand about somewhat aimlessly, and with apparent doubts as to what they ought to do on such an occasion, and under present circumstances, with their arms and legs, while their bright flower standards of the morning droop their faded heads disconsolately.

The revels will not last much longer ; no summer revels do in the west country, whatever winter revels may do. In another hour the old grannies will have crept contentedly to bed, the middle-aged men will be beginning to think of to-morrow's work, which must commence quite as early as

usual without the smallest thought being given to the fact that yesterday was a feast-day, the lovers will be wending their way through the woodland paths, where the night breeze is kissing the dew-sprinkled ferns, and the happy rabbits are dancing a salterella after their own heart and fashion, and little maidens will be dreaming of the rare and glittering spoils which they have brought back to the upland cottage as their own peculiar trophies of the day when "the Club Walks."

ALICE KING.

—
IDLE THOUGHTS.

BY AN IDLE FELLOW.
—
—

ON MEMORY.

I remember, I remember,
In the days of chill November.
How the blackbird on the—

I FORGET the rest. It is the beginning of the first piece of poetry I ever learnt; for

Hey, diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,

I take no note of, it being of a frivolous character and lacking in the qualities of true poetry. I collected fourpence by the recital of "I remember, I remember." I knew it was fourpence, because they told me that if I kept it until I got twopence more I should have sixpence, which argument, albeit undeniable, moved me not, and the money was squandered, to the best of my recollection, on the very next morning, although upon what memory is silent.

That is just the way with memory; nothing that she brings to us is complete. She is a wilful child; all her toys are broken. I remember tumbling into a huge dusthole, when a very small boy, but I have not the faintest recollection of ever getting out again; and, if memory were all we had to trust to, I should be compelled to believe I was there still. At another time—some years later—I was assisting at an exceedingly interesting love scene; but the only thing about it I can call to mind distinctly is that, at the most critical moment, somebody suddenly opened the door and said—"Emily, you're wanted," in a sepulchral tone that gave one the idea the police had come for her. All the tender words she said to me, and all the beautiful things I said to her, are utterly forgotten.

Life, altogether, is but a crumbling ruin, when we turn to look behind: a shattered column here, where a massive portal stood; the broken shaft of a window to mark my lady's bower; and a moulder heap of blackened stones where the glowing flames once leapt, and, over all, the tinted lichen and the ivy clinging green.

For everything looms pleasant through the softening haze of time. Even the sadness that is past seems sweet. Our boyish days look very merry to us now, all nutting, hoop, and gingerbread. The snubbings and the tooth-aches and the Latin verbs are all forgotten—the Latin verbs especially. And we fancy we were very happy

when we were hobbledoys, and loved; and we wish that we could love again. We never think of the heartaches, or the sleepless nights, or the hot dryness of our throats, when she said she could never be anything to us but a sister—as if any man wanted more sisters!

Yes, it is the brightness, not the darkness, that we see when we look back. The sunshine casts no shadows on the past. The road that we have traversed stretches very fair behind us. We see not the sharp stones. We dwell but on the roses by the wayside, and the strong briars that stung us are, to our distant eyes, but gentle tendrils waving in the wind. God be thanked that it is so—that the ever-lengthening chain of memory has only pleasant links, and that the bitterness and sorrow of to-day are smiled at on the morrow.

It seems as though the brightest side of everything were also its highest and best, so that, as our little lives sink back behind us into the dark sea of forgetfulness, all that which is the lightest and the most gladsome is the last to sink, and stands above the waters, long in sight, when the angry thoughts and smarting pain are buried deep below the waves and trouble us no more.

It is this glamour of the past, I suppose, that makes old folk talk so much nonsense about the days when they were young. The world appears to have been a very superior sort of place then, and things were more like what they ought to be. Boys were boys then, and girls were very different. Also winters were something like winters, and summers not at all the wretched things we get put off with now-a-days. As for the wonderful things people did in those times, and the extraordinary events that happened, it takes three strong men to believe half of them.

I like to hear one of the old boys telling all about it to a party of youngsters who he knows cannot contradict him. It is odd if, after a while, he doesn't swear that the moon shone every night when he was a boy, and that tossing mad bulls in a blanket was the favourite sport at his school.

It always has been, and always will be the same. The old folk of our grandfathers' young days sang a song bearing exactly the same burden; and the young folk of to-day will drone out precisely similar nonsense for the aggravation of the next generation. "Oh give me back the good old days of fifty years ago," has been the cry ever since Adam's fifty-first birthday. Take up the literature of 1835, and you will find the poets and novelists asking for the same impossible gift, as did the German Minnesingers, long before them, and the old Norse Saga writers long before that. And for the same thing sighed the early prophets and the philosophers of ancient Greece. From all accounts, the world has been getting worse and worse ever since it was created. All I can say is that it must have been a remarkably delightful place when it was first opened to the public, for it is very pleasant even now, if you only keep as much as possible in the sunshine, and take the rain good-temperedly.

Yet there is no gainsaying but what it must have been somewhat sweeter in that dewy morning of creation, when it was young and fresh, when the feet of the tramping millions had not trodden its grass to dust, nor the din of the myriad cities chased the silence for ever away. Life must have been noble and solemn to those

free-footed, loose-robed fathers of the human race, walking hand-in-hand with God under the great sky. They lived in sun-kissed tents amidst the lowing herds. They took their simple wants from the loving hand of Nature. They toiled and talked and thought; and the great earth rolled around in stillness, not yet laden with trouble and wrong.

Those days are past now. The quiet childhood of humanity, spent in the far-off forest glades, and by the murmuring rivers, is gone for ever; and human life is deepening down to manhood amidst tumult, doubt and hope. Its age of restful peace is past. It has its work to finish, and must hasten on. What that work may be—what this world's share is in the great Design—we know not, though our unconscious hands are helping to accomplish it. Like the tiny coral insect, working deep under the dark waters, we strive and struggle each for our own little ends, nor dream of the vast fabric we are building up for God.

Let us have done with vain regrets and longings for the days that never will be ours again. Our work lies in front, not behind us; and "Forward!" is our motto. Let us not sit with folded hands, gazing upon the past as if it were the building : it is but the foundation. Let us not waste heart and life thinking of what might have been, and forgetting the may be that lies before us. Opportunities flit by while we sit regretting the chances we have lost, and the happiness that comes to us we heed not, because of the happiness that is gone.

Years ago, when I used to wander of an evening from the fireside to the pleasant land of fairy tales, I met a doughty knight and true. Many dangers had he overcome, in many lands had been ; and all men knew him for a brave and well tried knight, and one that knew not fear; except, maybe, upon such seasons when even a brave man might feel afraid, and yet not be ashamed. Now, as this knight, one day, was pricking wearily along a toilsome road, his heart misgave him, and was sore within him, because of the trouble of the way. Rocks, dark and of a monstrous size, hung high above his head, and like enough it seemed unto the knight that they should fall, and he lie low beneath them. Chasms there were on either side, and darksome caves, wherein fierce robbers lived, and dragons, very terrible, whose jaws dripped blood. And upon the road there hung a darkness as of night. So it came over that good knight that he would no more press forward, but seek another road, less grievously beset with difficulty unto his gentle steed. But, when in haste he turned and looked behind, much marvelled our brave knight, for lo ! of all the way that he had ridden, there was naught for eye to see ; but, at his horse's heels, there yawned a mighty gulf, whereof no man might ever spy the bottom, so deep was that same gulf. Then, when Sir Ghelent saw that of going back there was none, he prayed to good Saint Cuthbert, and setting spurs into his steed, rode forward bravely and most joyously. And naught harmed him.

There is no returning on the road of life. The frail bridge of Time, on which we tread, sinks back into eternity at every step we take. The past is gone from us for ever. It has been gathered in and garnered. It belongs to us no more. No single word can ever be unspoken ; no single step

retraced. Therefore, it beseems us, as true knights, to prick on bravely, nor idly weep because we cannot now recall.

A new life begins for us with every second. Let us go forward joyously to meet it. We must press on whether we will or no, and we shall walk better with our eyes before us than with them ever cast behind.

A friend came to me the other day and urged me very eloquently to learn some wonderful system by which you never forgot anything. I don't know why he was so eager on the subject, unless it be that I occasionally borrow an umbrella, and have a knack of coming out, in the middle of a game of whist, with a mild, "Lor, I've been thinking all along that clubs were trumps." I declined the suggestion, however, in spite of the advantages he so attractively set forth. I have no wish to remember everything. There are many things in most mens' lives that had better be forgotten. There is that time, many years ago, when we did not act quite as honourably, quite as uprightly, as we, perhaps, should have done—that unfortunate deviation from the path of strict probity we once committed, and in which, more unfortunate still, we were found out—that act of folly, of meanness, of wrong. Ah, well, we paid the penalty, suffered the maddening hours of vain remorse, the hot agony of shame, the scorn, perhaps, of those we loved. Let us forget. Oh, Father Time, lift with your kindly hands those bitter memories from off our over-burdened hearts, for griefs are ever coming to us with the coming hours, and our little strength is only on the day.

Not that the past should be buried. The music of life would be mute if the chords of memory were snapped asunder. It is but the poisonous weeds, not the flowers, that we should root out from the garden of Mnemosyne. Do you remember Dickens's "Haunted Man," how he prayed for forgetfulness, and how, when his prayer was answered, he prayed for memory once more ? We do not want all the ghosts laid. It is only the haggard, cruel-eyed spectres that we flee from. Let the gentle, kindly phantoms haunt us as they will ; we are not afraid of them.

Ah me, the world grows very full of ghosts as we grow older. We need not seek in dismal churchyards, nor sleep in moated granges, to see their shadowy faces and hear the rustling of their garments in the night. Every house, every room; every creaking chair has its own particular ghost. They haunt the empty chambers of our lives, they throng around us like dead leaves, whirled in the autumn wind. Some are living, some are dead. We know not. We clasped their hands once, loved them, quarrelled with them, laughed with them, told them our thoughts and hopes, and aims, as they told us theirs, till it seemed our very hearts had joined in a grip that would defy the puny power of Death. They are gone now ; lost to us for ever. Their eyes will never look into ours again, and their voices we shall never hear. Only their ghosts come to us, and talk with us. We see them, dim and shadowy, through our tears. We stretch our yearning hands to them, but they are air.

Ghosts! They are with us night and day. They walk beside us in the busy street, under the glare of the sun. They sit by us in the twilight at home. We see their little faces looking from the

windows of the old school-house. We meet them in the woods and lanes, where we shouted and played as boys. Hark! cannot you hear their low laughter from behind the blackberry bushes, and their distant whoops along the grassy glades? Down here, through the quiet fields, and by the wood, where the evening shadows are lurking, winds the path where we used to watch for her at sunset. Look, she is there now, in the dainty, white frock we knew so well, with the big bonnet dangling from her little hands, and the sunny brown hair all tangled. Five thousand miles away! Dead for all we know! What of that? She is beside us now, and we can look into her laughing eyes, and hear her voice. She will vanish at the stile by the wood, and we shall be alone; and the shadows will creep out across the fields, and the night wind will sweep past moaning. Ghosts! they are always with us, and always will be, while the sad old world keeps echoing to the sob of long good-byes, while the cruel ships sail away across the great seas, and the cold, green earth lies heavy on the hearts of those we loved.

But, oh, ghosts, the world would be sadder still without you. Come to us, and speak to us, oh! you ghosts of our old loves. Ghosts of playmates, and of sweethearts, and old friends, of all you laughing boys and girls, oh, come to us, and be with us, for the world is very lonely, and new friends and faces are not like the old, and we cannot love them, nay, nor laugh with them as we have loved and laughed with you. And when we walked together, oh, ghosts of our youth, the world was very gay and bright; but now it has grown old, and we are growing weary, and only you can bring the brightness and the freshness back to us.

Memory is a rare ghost raiser. Like a haunted house, its walls are ever echoing to unseen feet. Through the broken casements we watch the fitting shadows of the dead, and the saddest shadows of them all are the shadows of our own dead selves.

Oh, those young bright faces, so full of truth and honour, of pure, good thoughts, of noble longings, how reproachfully they look upon us, with their deep, clear eyes!

I fear they have good cause for their sorrow, poor lads. Lies and cunning, and disbelief have crept into our hearts since those pre-shaving days—and we meant to be so great and good.

It is well we cannot see into the future. There are few boys of fourteen who would not feel ashamed of themselves at forty.

I like to sit and have a talk sometimes with that odd little chap that was myself long ago. I think he likes it too, for he comes so often of an evening when I am alone with my pipe, listening to the whispering of the flames. I see his solemn little face looking at me through the scented smoke as it floats upward, and I smile at him; and he smiles back at me, but his is such a grave, old-fashioned smile. We chat about old times; and now and then he takes me by the hand, and then we slip through the black bars of the grate and down the dusky glowing caves to the land that lies behind the firelight. There we find the days that used to be, and we wander along them together. He tells me as we walk all he thinks and feels. I laugh at him now and then, but the next moment I wish I had not, for he looks so grave, I am ashamed of being frivolous. Besides,

it is not showing proper respect to one so much older than myself—to one who was myself so very long before I became myself.

We don't talk much at first, but look at one another: I down at his curly hair and little blue bow, he up sideways at me as he trots. And, somehow, I fancy the shy, round eyes do not altogether approve of me, and he heaves a little sigh, as though he were disappointed. But, after a while, his bashfulness wears off, and he begins to chat. He tells me his favourite fairy tales, he can do up to six times, and he has a guinea-pig, and pa says fairy tales ain't true; and isn't a pity, 'cos he would so like to be a knight and fight a dragon and marry a beautiful princess. But he takes a more practical view of life when he reaches seven, and would prefer to be a bargee, and grow up and earn a lot of money. Maybe, this is the consequence of falling in love, which he does about this time, with the young lady at the milk-shop aged six. (God bless her little ever dancing feet, whatever size they may be now!) He must be very fond of her, for he gives her one day his chiefest treasure, to wit, a huge pocket-knife with four rusty blades and a corkscrew, which latter has a knack of working itself out in some mysterious manner and sticking into its owner's leg. She is an affectionate little thing, and she throws her arms round his neck and kisses him for it, then and there, outside the shop. But the stupid world (in the person of the boy at the cigar emporium next door) jeers at such tokens of love. Whereupon my young friend very properly prepares to punch the head of the boy at the cigar emporium next door. But he fails in the attempt, the boy at the cigar emporium next door punching his instead.

And then comes school life with its bitter little sorrows and its joyous shoutings, its jolly larks, and its hot tears falling on beastly Latin grammars and silly old copybooks. It is at school that he injures himself for life—as I firmly believe—trying to pronounce German; and it is there, too, that he learns of the importance attached by the French nation to pens, ink and paper. "Have you pens, ink and paper?" is the first question asked by one Frenchman of another on their meeting. The other fellow has not any of them, as a rule, but says that the uncle of his brother has got them all three. The first fellow doesn't appear to care a hang about the uncle of the other fellow's brother; what he wants to know now is, has the neighbour of the other fellow's mother got 'em? "The neighbour of my mother has no pens, no ink, and no paper," replies the other man, beginning to get wild. "Has the child of thy female gardener some pens, some ink, or some paper?" He has him there. After worrying enough about these wretched inks, pens and paper to make everybody miserable, it turns out that the child of his own female gardener hasn't any. Such a discovery would shut up any one but a French exercise man. It has no effect at all, though, on this shameless creature. He never thinks of apologizing, but says his aunt has some mustard, some pepper, and some salt.

So, in the acquisition of more or less useless knowledge, soon happily to be forgotten, boyhood passes away. The red-brick school-house fades from view, and we turn down into the world's high road. My little friend is no longer little

now. The short jacket has sprouted tails. The battered cap, so useful as a combination of pocket-handkerchief, drinking-cup, and weapon of attack, has grown high and glossy; and instead of a slate-pencil in his mouth there is a cigarette, the smoke of which troubles him, for it will get up his nose. He tries a cigar a little later on, as being more stylish—a big, black Havannah. It doesn't seem altogether to agree with him, for I find him sitting over a bucket in the back kitchen afterwards, solemnly swearing never to smoke again.

And now his moustache begins to be almost visible to the naked eye, whereupon he immediately takes to brandy-and-sodas, and fancies himself a man. He talks about "two to one against the favourite," refers to actresses as "Little Emmy," and "Kate" and "Baby," and murmurs about his "losses at cards the other night," in a style implying that thousands have been squandered, though, to do him justice, the actual amount is most probably one-and-twopence. Also, if I see aright—for it is always twilight in this land of memories—he sticks an eyeglass in his eye and stumbles over everything.

His female relations, much troubled at these things, pray for him (bless their gentle hearts!), and see visions of Old Bailey trials and halters as the only possible outcome of such reckless dissipation; and the prediction of his first schoolmaster, that he would come to a bad end, assumes the proportions of inspired prophecy.

He has a lordly contempt at this age for the other sex, a blatantly good opinion of himself, and a sociably patronizing manner towards all the elderly male friends of the family. Altogether, it must be confessed he is somewhat of a nuisance about this time,

It does not last long, though. He falls in love in a little while, and that soon takes the bounce out of him. I notice his boots are much too small for him now, and his hair is fearfully and wonderfully arranged. He reads poetry more than he used to, and he keeps a rhyming dictionary in his bedroom. Every morning, on the floor, Emily Jane finds scraps of torn-up paper, and reads theron of "cruel hearts and love's deep darts," of "beauteous eyes and lovers' sighs," and much more of the old, old song that lads so love to sing, and lassies love to listen to, while giving their dainty heads a toss, and pretending never to hear.

The course of love, however, seems not to have run smoothly, for, later on, he takes more walking exercise and less sleep, poor boy, than is good for him; and his face is suggestive of anything but wedding bells and happiness ever after.

And here he seems to vanish. The little, boyish self that has grown up beside me as we walked, is gone.

I am alone, and the road is very dark. I stumble on, I know not how nor care, for the way seems leading nowhere, and there is no light to guide.

But at last the morning comes, and I find that I have grown into myself.

JEROME K. JEROME.



DOROTHY'S VERDICT.

BY ANNETTE CALTHROP.

MISS CARMICHAEL was "at home" every Saturday afternoon, at number 15b, Ecclestone Street, Belgravia. The London season was at high tide; Miss Carmichael had but to throw open her doors; there passed within them a continuous stream of willing guests.

Mr. Carmichael, owner of the house in Ecclestone Street, was an elderly gentleman, brother of the present baronet; Sir Willoughby, and member for the small borough of Combermouth, in Northumberland. He was a widower; his sister, Mrs. Daubenay, lived with him while her husband was away on military duty in India. But it was his daughter Beryl who did the honours of his home.

Beryl Carmichael was beautiful, self-possessed, a trifle imperious; on all sides she received homage and admiration. She had reigned as belle of one London season, and this year not a rival appeared with power to wrest away her crown.

Not highly intellectual, Miss Carmichael had the art to appear so; it was her fancy to pose as patroness of art and letters. Her aunt, Mrs. Daubenay, a worldly-minded dame, with the peerage at her fingers' ends, eyed askance the shabbily dressed authors, the wild looking artists, and the uncouth German musical professors who, Saturday after Saturday, invaded Beryl's drawing-room.

Among the crowd who mounted the staircase of Mr. Carmichael's house, on the Saturday when our story opens, was Professor Lawrence Boyton.

Lawrence Boyton was Professor of English language and literature at St. Biddulph's College, Loudon, and one of the examiners to the London University. He was a man of ability and culture, and of a gentle, poetical nature. His *Life of Pope*, his *Critical Study of Milton*, and his *England under Elizabeth*, have acquired too substantial a fame to need encomium here. Stowed away in a drawer in his study in Gower Street, was a work, as yet unknown to the world—the unfinished manuscript of a novel, on which he hoped to concentrate his attention when vacation should give him leisure. The heroine of the tale—he called her Rachel—was drawn from life. The original of the portrait was Beryl Carmichael.

Like his host Mr. Carmichael, Boyton was a widower. His wife had died some three years before our story opens, and had left him with three young children. In the first week of his bereavement his mother, who was an Irishwoman, moved from Dublin to take up the position of mistress of his house. She tried her best to maintain order among his children, but the attempt met with only limited success. Sweet-tempered, kindly, a little indolent, it was difficult to her to keep up any show of authority. The one boy of the family attended the school connected with St. Biddulph's; the two girls were under the care of a daily governess. But the old lady found, to her cost, that their play-hours were long, and that their capacity for mischief was unbounded. Recognizing at last her powerlessness to preserve order in schoolroom and nursery, she had just secured the services of a resident governess, the daughter of an East End curate named Marsden, for whom she had a high regard.

Boyton had left behind him in his study, on

this day when we find him in Eccleston Street, a goodly pile of work. A revision of his *Life of Pope*, for a fifth edition, claimed his attention, and he had engaged to write before morning an article of six pages for the *Friday Review*. He knew, when he turned his back on his work, that he must sit up all night to make up for lost time. But he told himself that it was essential for him to go to the Carmichaels this afternoon. "The new editor of the *Friday* will be there; I want to take him to task for mangling that February set of verses. Then there's the novel! My heroine is growing terribly wooden; it's time that I studied her original." So argued Boyton, only partially deceiving himself. At the bottom of his heart he knew that his assigned reasons were not strong enough to take him to Eccleston Street at the cost of a night's hard work.

Several newly arrived guests exchanged greetings with Professor Boyton, as he elbowed his way up the Carmichael's staircase.

The Professor was a small, slim man, some five-and-thirty years of age; his complexion was pallid; his features could lay no claim to regularity; a habit which he had acquired of passing his hands through his hair made his thick brown curls not a little untidy. Eager intellect was stamped on his face, and his blue Irish eyes were full of expression.

Beryl Carmichael stood near the door to receive her guests. She wore a black dress of some soft material, trimmed with black lace and knots of crimson ribbon. Her tall figure, erect bearing, and shapely head, her masses of red-brown hair, and her big brown eyes wrung unqualified praise from the most fastidious of critics. Beryl moved well—what is more, she stood still well. There was something queenlike in her air of supreme repose.

Boyton, having shaken hands with his hostess, gave way to other comers; a crowd of admirers closed round her. Despairing to penetrate the magic circle, he tried to content himself with watching Miss Carmichael.

Standing close beside her, and bending his head down to hers, was a young man, whom Boyton did not remember to have seen before. He was a good-looking fellow, with a well-built, powerful frame, frank grey eyes, and crisply curling fair hair.

"Holloa, Boyton, you here!" called a genial voice.

The Professor, looking round, saw a friend—a certain Andrew Slingsby, Fellow and Tutor of Pembroke, Oxford. He was a tall, awkward man, with greyish hair, and a plain, sallow, clever face.

Boyton returned the greeting cordially.

"How well Miss Carmichael looks this afternoon!"

"Yes," shortly.

"By Jove, she's handsome as a goddess!"

No answer.

"Do you know the fellow who is monopolizing her?"

"No."

"He's young Prescott—only son of Sir James Prescott, the banker. The youngster is in luck; he'll be a millionaire one of these days, and people say that he is to marry Miss Carmichael."

"Who says so?" quickly.

"Common report. I have heard it several times this afternoon."

"Common report! I wonder that you trouble to repeat it. Gossips never let Miss Carmichael and her future alone."

After a few words of desultory conversation, Slingsby nodded good-bye, and moved off.

Left to himself, Boyton began to wonder whether the report, which he had set aside, could be true. His spirits sank to zero.

The rooms grew fuller. Young Prescott never left Beryl's side.

After spending an hour or so among the throng without any chance of an especial audience, Boyton came forward to take his leave.

"Going, Professor?" said Miss Carmichael in a tone of regret. "And I haven't had an opportunity of exchanging a word with you. You must come again soon," she added, with the air of a princess.

Boyton bowed.

Then Miss Carmichael had a message of thanks to send to Mrs. Boyton, who had recommended to her as singing-mistress her grandchildren's governess, and her own protégée, Miss Marsden.

Dismissed with gracious words, as from a royal presence, the Professor made his way out of the room.

Beryl had a great regard and liking for Lawrence Boyton. The influence of his mind on hers was greater than she knew. Out of her friendship with him came her love for many books whose charms she fondly believed that she had discovered for herself. It was Boyton who led her to turn not only from sensational literature, but from the vague sense of beauty given by purely conventional poetical phraseology; it was Boyton who taught her to realize the truth that the simplest words are the strongest words, and that the essence of life is rather in its daily tenor than its startling effects.

Boyton was utterly in love with Beryl Carmichael. He put from him, so far as he was able, the fact of his love, and of the pain which it involved.

It was one thing to admire and like Boyton. It would be altogether another thing for the beauty of the season—remembering the lightness of his purse and the heaviness of his encumbrances—to accept his love. From her cradle, Thackeray's articles of faith for a pretty girl of the world—"I believe in elder sons and a wealthy husband, and a house in town and a house in the country"—had been, in substance, if not in words, set before Beryl by her aunt. Her natural bias was towards the rejection of so mean a creed, but she could not altogether shake herself free from the influence of worldly precepts.

Not till he had entered his own door did the thought of the work awaiting him return to Boyton's mind. He made a wry face, as he turned to his study.

"Father!" A glad welcoming voice was heard; and a little girl of some six years of age, came flying down the stairs. She was a pretty child, with blue eyes and a shower of fair hair. A mother, looking at her with observant maternal eyes, would have attributed to delicate health the bright light in her eyes and the brilliant colour in her cheeks. Fact warranted the ascription. Dorothy Boyton had been ailing from her birth.

"Take care." Boyton stretched out a helping hand as Dorothy prepared to clear the last three steps at a bound.

"I'll help you off with your coat, father." The help was not likely to prove very efficacious, but Boyton rewarded it beforehand with a kiss. However weary or occupied he might be, he had always a gentle word and look for his little daughter. She went off with him, now, to his study—a small back room, shabbily furnished, rich only in books, and untidily strewn with printed papers and manuscripts—and when he had taken his seat, before a writing table, she climbed upon his knee.

"Tell me a tale," she cried, pressing close to him, and throwing both arms round his neck.

"You must content yourself with story books, to-night, little one. Father's busy."

"Tell me a tale," persisted Dorothy, feigning deafness.

Boytom looked down on the child's eager face; it was hard to disappoint her. "Once upon a time," he began, in a low voice, with rather a sad smile upon his lips.

At the sound of those magic words, Dorothy unclasped her hands and settled herself to listen.

"Once upon a time, there lived a man"—

"An old man?" asked the child.

"No; a man approaching middle life—some where about father's age."

"Well?" Dorothy rocked herself to and fro, in excited expectancy.

"This man had many beautiful things to gladden his life—above all," softly stroking Dorothy's hair, "he had one thing of rare value—one thing which he dearly loved. But for all that, he was unsatisfied; he wanted something which was not for him."

Dorothy fancied from this opening to the story that she could scent a moral in the distance. She disliked tales with morals; she relaxed her attention.

"Night after night he watched the moon and the stars in the dark sky, far away out of his reach. He was a foolish man—such a foolish man, little Dorothy. He cried for the moon."

"Men don't cry, father," the girl protested, breaking into an expositulatory little laugh.

"Sometimes they do, when they are foolish, as this man was. He did not try to lure the moon down to the earth. That would have been useless, you know. But—"

"Stop, father," laying a little hand on Boyton's mouth, "you didn't finish. I don't care for that tale one scrap. It's only babies who cry for the moon. I don't believe that a real grown-up man ever was so silly."

Again Boyton smiled his sad smile. "Come to me for a better tale in the morning, darling," he said. "I don't know any other to-night. Now run to granny, like a useful little maiden, and ask her, with my love, to excuse me at dinner this evening. Say that I am not hungry, and that I have a good deal of writing to do; and ask Jane to make me some coffee."

Off went the child to execute her father's commission.

Suddenly, a well-trained voice was heard, singing the opening notes of a German song: "*Mein kind, wir waren kinder*" ("My child, we were but children").

Boytom laid down his pen in some surprise.

The voice sounded strangely sweet in the dull old house. "Who can be here?" he wondered.

Boytom knew German well; he readily understood the words. They came to him almost with the force of a personal appeal.

"*Mein kind, wir waren kinder*—My child, we were but children," he repeated, and appropriated the opening line.

"A child! Yes, Dorothy was right. Grown men don't waste their strength in unavailing regrets. I'm a child in weakness, though certainly not—"Boytom smiled a little grimly—"in years."

The identity of the singer puzzled the professor. But presently a clue to the mystery presented itself. "Marsden's daughter, the new governess!" he exclaimed, in a tone of discovery, and he took up his pen and fell to work.

The next evening the professor made the acquaintance of the new governess. He was engaged to dine with his mother at the Carmichaels; and when time for starting came, he remembered that he had not seen his children throughout the day. He made his way to the schoolroom—a large, dull, upstairs room—knocked at the door and passed in. A pretty picture met his eye. It was a chilly May evening, and a fire burned in the grate. In a horsehair-covered elbow chair, near the blaze, sat a young woman with fair smooth hair, a grave face, and serious hazel eyes; in her lap was Dorothy. Seated on the hearthrug, and pressing against a high fender a cheek which she now and again turned to her companions to display the marks left by the brass bars, was Irene Boyton, a girl of some eight years old. The eldest child of the family—Philip, a lad of ten—had perched himself on one of the capacious arms of the chair of state; he hacked a stick with a blunt knife, and whistled under his breath. Meanwhile the young woman—her name was Rachel Marsden—was relating to her little audience one of Hans Andersen's immortal fairy tales.

Boytom stood still for a moment to admire the picture.

"How do you do, Miss Marsden?" he said, advancing at last. "I am ashamed to be so late in introducing myself and bidding you welcome to my house."

Rachel rose to return the greeting.

"Miss Marsden knows about the Ugly Little Duckling and the Steadfast Tin Soldier, father," began Dorothy, running up to Boyton.

"Indeed!"

The Professor cast his eyes round the schoolroom. He seldom entered the room; it struck him now as very shabby and bare, and he glanced compassionately towards Rachel.

"I was fortunate enough to hear some of your music yesterday," he said, courteously. "You were singing a German song. If you read German let me invite you into my study. There are several German books there; please consider yourself welcome to their contents."

"You are very kind."

"Laurence," called Mrs. Boyton's voice. "Where are you, Laurence? The cab is at the door."

"Good-night, Miss Marsden. Good-night, children."

And in another minute the Professor was driving along Gower Street as fast as a somewhat infirm cab-horse could take him.

Boyton found young Prescott at the Carmichaels; he was evidently on the most intimate terms with host and hostess. After the guests had gone, Mrs. Daubenay spoke plainly to Beryl of her desire that her niece should play her cards well for the stake of the presidency of the Prescott establishment.

Time went on. Rachel often availed herself, during hours when the Professor was absent from the house, of his permission to make a raid on his bookshelves. On one of these occasions she was discovered by Boyton, who took the opportunity of translating for her some break-neck phrases in a German book which she had chosen. He had taken a fancy to Rachel's gentle face, and the idea that she might be lonely or dull troubled him. Often, on his return from St. Biddulph's, he would pay a visit to the schoolroom, with a magazine or review for her reading. In time Rachel occasionally helped him in his work; her observation of the weariness often written on his face emboldened her to offer her services. She overlooked examination papers, and once or twice she made a fair copy of some sheets of Boyton's novel. The heroine of the book awakened her interest and curiosity; in describing that lady and her doings, the author had written out of the abundance of his heart.

"If ever you write a novel, Miss Marsden, draw your characters from the life; lay figures make poor heroes and heroines," Boyton said one day; and from the remark the girl gathered the truth, that the "Rachel" of whom he wrote so eloquently was a real woman. Miss Marsden had, as we have seen, been recommended by Mrs. Boyton to Miss Carmichael as singing mistress. The old lady kindly allowed the governess to give two lessons a week in Eccleston Street, and this outside employment proved the means of Rachel's gaining information on points of social interest. She picked up, for example, scraps of gossip concerning Boyton's admiration for Beryl; at once she realized who was the "Rachel" of his novel. "No wonder that he cares for her," the girl said to herself sometimes when Beryl stood before her in the stateliness of her beauty. The thought somehow was tinged with sadness.

So matters stood when Boyton called one June afternoon in Eccleston Street. He was to lecture that evening in St. James's Hall, and he took with him to the Carmichaels some lecture tickets which Beryl had commissioned him to procure for her.

Truth to tell, he had worked on the lecture with more than wonted zest; the knowledge that Miss Carmichael would hear what he had to say influenced his arrangement of every part, from introduction to peroration. Boyton seldom made so elaborate a preparation; it was his custom to note down leading facts, and to trust for terms of expression to the inspiration of the moment.

Beryl was at home and alone when he called. She was gracious and conversational; but a conviction fastened upon Boyton's mind, in the course of the interview, that she was in reality ill at ease.

"I have something to say to you," she began at last, and she nervously turned the tickets over and over in her lap. "We have been friends so long that I flatter myself you will be interested in the news; it concerns me very nearly."

What strange inspiration was it which told

Boyton all at once the nature of Beryl's news? The room and its occupants faded from his sight; his heart seemed to stand still.

"Perhaps I can guess your news, Miss Carmichael," he said, recovering himself, and speaking in a suppressed voice. "Reports, which have reached me lately, make guessing comparatively easy. You are"—the brave voice faltered a little—"engaged to be married?"

"Yes."

"To Mr. Prescott?"

"Yes."

Then there was dead silence. Though the suggestion had come from Boyton himself, the pain of its confirmation was, for the moment, too keen for his self-possession. When at length he spoke he commanded his voice only with a strong effort. "I wish you all happiness, Miss Carmichael," he said softly.

Beryl's face had grown suddenly white and sorrowful. Her evident sadness touched Boyton—the more so as a theory respecting its cause occurred to his mind.

"Don't be troubled for me," he whispered, compassionate for her, rather than for himself. "I can bear my pain; never fear. I have not—believe me—been presumptuous enough to dream that I could attain—the impossible."

Then with bent head and hurried step Boyton left the room.

Beryl sprang forward, a cry upon her lips. Her first impulse was to call her visitor back—to pour into his ear a stream of wild words, which should change all his future and her own. The cry was stifled, the impulse checked.

When Boyton left the Carmichaels' house he walked on at a quick pace, regardless where he went. Presently he found himself pacing up and down under the elms of Gray's Inn Gardens. He told himself that he had dreamed out the most glorious dream of his life. It was well to face the realities of existence. But now, while the waking was so recent, his courage failed; he shrank from contemplating the dull grey future which stretched out before him.

Six o'clock struck, then seven, then half-past seven. With a start, the Professor remembered that his lecture was announced for eight. He hurried to Gower Street, collected his notes, dashed out of the house, hailed a passing hansom, and as the clock pointed to five minutes past eight, he mounted the platform from which his address was to be delivered.

The hall was filled with a fashionable audience. In the front row of seats was Beryl Carmichael; at her side sat young Prescott, an air of proud proprietorship stamped on his face. On Beryl's left hand was Mrs. Daubenay. The lecturer did not observe one of the many faces turned up to his. He looked over the sea of heads into space as he began to speak.

It was well for Boyton that he had elaborately prepared his lecture, and that he had a fine verbal memory. In an impromptu speech requiring concentrated thought, he might have broken down; but his studied words came back to him, though he had little sense of their meaning. He poured them forth in a low, clear voice, and with instinctive correctness of emphasis. Every now and then a round of applause greeted him, then he started with a half stupid wonder what it was

which had aroused his hearers. But, by-and-by, he began to warm into a realization of his subject. His wits returned; an eager look came into his eyes, he forgot himself and his troubles. The prepared track was left, and the speaker branched off where the impulse of the moment led him.

The subject of the lecture was "Richard Steele." And Steele, with his power of fast friendship, his zeal for literature, his big warm heart, his Irish impulsiveness, and his many blunders, possessed a great attraction for his compatriot, the Professor. Much as Boyton cared for Steele's literary productions, he cared most for the man who lived in them. So his lecture was not dull criticism of books, but an unveiling through their aid of a human being, joyous and sociable, feeling strongly all the interests of humanity, and very open to temptation. Boyton knew that he was carrying his audience with him, and he enjoyed his triumph. No recollection of the past or dread of the future troubled him—he lived in the present. When, at last, he delivered his peroration, crushed his notes in his hand, tossed back his hair, and made his final bow, he was greeted with loud applause.

"I—I—wonder whether his mother is here—whether any woman, who may take pride in him, heard him to-night," cried Beryl, under her breath, her eyes following the professor.

"Can't say," returned Prescott, supposing that the remark was addressed to himself. "I don't know old Mrs. Boyton, by sight. Mind the step, Beryl, my—my—" A strange look in Beryl's cold eyes checked Prescott in the utterance of an endearing epithet.

Boyton avoided his friends. The excitement of the lecture over, his depression returned in full force. Pulling his hat over his eyes, he was passing out at a side door, when he found himself addressed by one of his servants.

"You here, John!" he said, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Boyton was out, and Miss Marsden sent me here for you. Miss Dorothy—"

"What about Miss Dorothy?" Boyton turned quickly.

"Miss Marsden wished you to come home at once, sir. Miss Dorothy has been taken very ill."

Then a mist came before Boyton's eyes. He caught his servant's arm, and made his way with unsteady steps out of the hall.

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLES never come singly. Boyton had hardly realized all the disappointment to himself which was involved in the fact of Beryl's engagement, when he was confronted by another sorrow, in the serious illness of his favourite daughter. All through the long summer days Dorothy lay on a sick bed, from which she was never to rise.

The child's most constant companions during her illness were her father and Rachel Marsden. It was her father who brought her flowers and picture books, who related, for her amusement, the brightest and merriest and most impossible of fairy tales, with never a moral to be deducted from them. It was Rachel who told her, in reverent voice, the sweet story of Jewish children on whom Omnipotence laid human hands and breathed a human blessing.

At last a call was given to Dorothy to share in that divinely human blessing in all its fulness.

The call came one evening in late autumn. The wind was moaning without; sere leaves had made their way into Gower Street from neighbouring squares, and lay in little wet heaps upon the pavement. Boyton sat by Dorothy's bed, his eyes intently fixed upon the dear face all unconscious of his scrutiny. He knew only too well that the end had come.

"Where's father," asked a weak voice, and two small hands groped in gathering darkness.

"I am here, love. O! Dorothy"—with a sharp cry—"how can I let thee go?"

With a supreme effort the child raised her head, and laid it against Boyton's breast. The strongest love of her life was strongest in death. "Don't be sorry, father," she murmured.

"Not sorry! Oh! my Dorothy!"

"Don't be sorry," the little voice pleaded again; and the child's last look—a look which he saw dimly through obscuring tears—was for her father.

Boyton's grief at parting from his darling was beyond the power of words to tell. His nature was eminently affectionate; and his marriage had not been a happy one; the love, which his wife had failed to share or to deserve, had been concentrated on his children—above all on Dorothy.

In the first bitterness of his bereavement he could not bear any companionship but that of Rachel, whose presence was the more grateful to him by the memory of the untiring care and love which she had lavished on his child. Spite of the vigour and independence of his intellect, Boyton always felt a need of some one on whose affection and sympathy he could lean. Now that blow after blow had fallen upon him, Rachel supplied that need. As time went on he resumed his old work, and casual observers saw little change in him; many a laugh emanated from the Professor's platform in the "English Room" at St. Biddulph's, and was echoed in the students' benches. But Rachel, watching Boyton with clearer eyes than those of students and ordinary acquaintances, knew how sorely he missed Dorothy; she knew, too, that his loss had not been his only cause for sorrow. More than once she had seen Mr. Prescott in Eccleston Street when she had gone there to give a lesson, and she had not failed to discover the relation in which he stood to the mistress of the house.

Miss Carmichael wrote Boyton a kindly expressed letter of condolence when she heard the news of Dorothy's death, but he never saw her now; since his bereavement he declined all invitations into society, and she had passed out of his life.

Winter set in, cold and dreary. It went by without bringing much change to the household in Gower Street.

The Professor looked upon Rachel as a close friend; her cheerful composure and self-reliance had a soothing effect upon him.

"She seems to carry an atmosphere of peace with her," he thought as he looked down into her calm face and steady grey eyes.

"No, he ain't courtin', bless yer!" nurse declared to her fellow-servants, who ascribed to matrimonial designs the fact that the Professor spent most of his spare time now with Rachel.

"You see Miss Marsden was with Miss Dorothy

at the last, and he feels kind o' drawed to her on the child's account."

Nurse's hearers took the liberty of questioning her verdict.

One fact, meanwhile, was evident; the advance of Boyton's happiness was the main desire and study of Rachel's life.

One day in early spring Miss Carmichael sent to Rachel to excuse herself from taking one of her usual singing lessons. The message was carried by her maid, who, being admitted into the schoolroom, where the governess was alone, and being in a communicative mood, announced to Rachel the surprising news that her mistress's engagement to Mr. Prescott had been broken off.

The news was of greater import to Rachel than the narrator knew. When the maid was gone, the girl thought over her tidings intently and in some agitation. So Miss Carmichael was free! The fetters which she had voluntarily assumed had proved too galling after all. Miss Carmichael—so Rachel told herself—would have a different answer for Professor Boyton, if he pleaded his cause a second time. She cared—surely she must have cared—for him all along; she was free to listen to her own heart now.

Rachel tried to believe that for Boyton's sake she was glad that the prize which he had despised to gain was attainable at last. But in her secret heart she knew that she was not glad; a heavy weight had fallen upon her spirits.

In the midst of her meditation Boyton appeared. He had been anxious, he said, for an opportunity to speak to her privately; he was fortunate to find her alone. Truth to tell, the interview was a deeply important one in the girl's history.

Boyton asked Rachel to become his wife. Not a year had elapsed since he had told himself under the trees in Gray's Inn Gardens that the most glorious dream of his life had been dreamed out, and that only the prosaic monotones of existence were left for him. Now it seemed that he was courting a new happiness. But the change was not so marvellous as it appeared. The months which had passed, though few, had been eventful; a mutual sorrow had drawn him nearer to Rachel than the influence of years of ordinary prosperity could have done. Boyton spoke quite frankly of the dream in which Miss Carmichael had been the central figure; he declared that it was always impossible of fruition, and that it was over for ever now. Rachel was very dear to him—the dearer for her association with Dorothy; he pleaded with her to accept the grateful devotion of his life.

Rachel listened with blank, white face, which grew whiter as Boyton went on.

"That he should speak to me thus on this day of all days!" was the unspoken cry within her heart.

The fulfilment of a supreme hope was within her reach, and she dared not raise her hand to take it.

"He does not know of Miss Carmichael's freedom; with the knowledge, his old love will revive," she thought.

In a faltering voice, she thanked Boyton for the honour which he had done her. It was, she said, impossible for her to accept his proposal. She

could assign no cause for its rejection; he must trust her that the reason was an all-sufficient one.

Six months passed away. Rachel had left Gower Street, and had taken rooms in Kensington. She gave music lessons in schools and families in the neighbourhood; Boyton's influence had been useful in gaining her employment. Rachel preferred the freedom of this mode of earning her living (so she had told Mrs. Boyton when she quitted that lady's house), to the confinement of a situation as resident governess. But she kept to herself the real reason of the change; she could not bear to live on under the same roof with Boyton when she might not accept his love.

Rachel sat at a piano in a small room of a house in an old-fashioned square. She sang her old song, "*Mein kind, wir waren kinder*"

The noise of the Kensington main road was only faintly heard in the quiet square. It was a lovely autumn evening; a harvest moon shone serenely down, casting long shadows of trees along the grass in the square garden.

Rachel sang on in the semi-darkness. She was tired and depressed; the loneliness of her present life was less bearable than usual to-night. The old days in Gower Street seemed very far behind her.

A step was heard on the stairs; Boyton entered. He had more than once before made his way to Rachel's rooms.

"Don't let me interrupt the music," he said with a smile of greeting. He made his way to the open window and looked out over the moonlight while he listened to the song.

"*Mein kind, wir waren kinder*—My child, we were but children." So ran the song. Boyton remembered the words; they were the first that he had heard from Rachel's lips. He recalled the evening in Gower Street, when they had fallen appropriately on his ear as he had told little Dorothy the story of the man, "somewhere about father's age," who had irrationally "cried for the moon."

The moonlight and the song carried Boyton's thoughts to Beryl.

"Do you often go to Eccleston Street, Miss Marsden?" he asked abruptly as the song came to an end, and Rachel busied herself in closing curtains and lighting lights.

"No, I have given up my lessons there. Miss Carmichael"—Rachel spoke in a half apologetic tone—"seemed to me too proficient to need more of my teaching."

"If you haven't been there lately, you probably haven't heard the news. Miss Carmichael—let me lift that lamp for you—is engaged to Lord Combermouth."

"Engaged! To Lord Combermouth!" Rachel opened her eyes wide in astonishment.

"Yes; she threw young Prescott over some six months ago; didn't you hear? I don't know what reason she assigned for his dismissal, but the real one was that he stood in her way to a marquisate. Lord Combermouth had been paying her marked attention, and she preferred his title to Prescott's riches; in everything but social position he is her inferior and Prescott's."

There was no answer. Rachel was asking her-

"Dolly drowned one—two—three," she repeated; "Dolly must have one more." self one all-engrossing question. Was it possible that Beryl's resumption of freedom had not been prompted by any reference to the professor? Was it possible that her own rejection of happiness had been an unnecessary sacrifice after all?

Boyton's face grew grave; his lightness of tone had been all assumed. "Isn't it a thousand pities," he said—and there was now a world of regret in his voice—"to see a fine nature like Beryl Carmichael's succumb to debasing influences? Nature never meant her for a woman of the world; she had very noble instincts. But close association with Mrs. Daubenay and her friends have dragged her down." Boyton's lament was only the sadder, because it was no longer a lament over Beryl's indifference to his former love, but over her unworthiness to have ever inspired the love. "Once," he said regretfully, "Miss Carmichael had high aspirations; now vulgar ambition has taken their place."

There occurred to Boyton's mind, as he spoke, Thackeray's words, concerning Ethel Newcome, in days when the influence of mercenary relations threatened to convert into a struggle for worldly honours a life begun with noble aims: "Oh, to think of a generous nature, and the world, and nothing but the world, to occupy it—of a brave intellect, and the milliner's bandboxes, and the scandal of the coteries, and the fiddle-faddle of the Court for its sole exercise; of the rush and hurry from entertainment to entertainment, of the constant smiles and cares of representation, of the prayerless rest at night, and the awaking to a godless morrow!"

Rachel was still silent. Boyton looked at her quickly. A suspicion began to dawn in his mind; it grew clearer as he watched her.

"Listen, Rachel," he said, laying his hand on the girl's arm, "had a generous regard to what you thought my interests with Beryl Carmichael anything to do with your refusal to be my wife? If so, you have unwittingly done both yourself and me a great wrong. Cannot you see"—emphatically—"that Beryl is nothing to me, now? One no longer worships when one has found one's idol to be clay. It's true—why should I deny the fact?—that I did love Beryl very devotedly. But my love was a passion, a torment—never a rest and a strength as is my love for you. Beryl dazzled and fascinated me, almost against my will. I knew all along that in lifting my eyes to her I was like a child crying for the moon. 'Men don't cry,' was my little Dorothy's verdict, and her words seemed like a refrain of your own song: '*Mein kind, wir waren kinder.*' You and the child were right. But will you not trust me that the old childishness is over? It is a man's love which I offer you—a love to last for life. Sorrow has taught me something of your worth and of my great need of you. Tell me," the speaker's voice sank to a tender whisper, "will you again reject my love?"

There was no verbal reply. But Rachel lifted her face, and in its look of radiant happiness Boyton read his answer.

FOUND DROWNED,

BY RITSON STEWART.

CHAPTER IV.

A SIMPLE CHILD AND A FOOLISH OLD MAN.

THE more I saw of Mary's life the more reasonable appeared to me her desire to leave her pretty home. It ought to have been a happy one—probably it had once been so—but now it was clouded over by its association with the recent melancholy deaths. She had reason to think of the moral effect of this association on her sister's character as well as the actual physical danger of nearness to the river. Little Dolly was not developing all the sweetness of character which we desire to find in the children about us; rather did a witch-like drollness and grim enjoyment of disaster begin to predominate. I discovered that she was more than indifferent to the comfort of her dolls; she was guilty of actual ill-treatment, and something very like murder in her conduct to them.

I found her playing in the cottage garden one sunny morning. A slab of slate had been put across the tiny beck running there, to form a bridge into the wood beyond. Dolly was dragging her doll over this bridge in her little cart, pulling it along with many tugs and jerks; and this time without any protecting stone on the rag skirts. Many times she crossed the bridge, looking behind her to see what happened to the doll in the cart. More and more it hung over the side, and wobbled helplessly towards the stream; at last a sudden jerk sent it over the edge of the cart, and it lay on the slab sprawling and miserable. To my surprise Dolly, instead of hastening to its assistance, gave it a final and decisive push into the stream, making at the same time this strange observation—

"Naughty dolly, go drown."

The water swirled the wooden ruin into a pool below, where it lay swamped against the pebbles, its deplorable rag raiment entangled in a briar. Then Dolly extricated her cart with great care from the bridge, where it had got wedged, offered her hand to me in a confiding manner, and remarked—

"Dolly drowned three dolls. Dolly go ask granddad for one more."

Matthew was standing at the back of the cottage, his grey hair stirred by the breeze, and his thin hand shading his eyes from the sunshine; a venerable figure he looked, in spite of the fond but somewhat foolish smile with which he regarded the child. There was at the moment something touching even in the mental weakness which faintly clouded the intelligence of his expression.

"She is a clever child, sir, is my Dolly," he said to me, repeating a remark that he had made many times before.

"Grandad," said Dolly promptly, "me gone drowned ander naughty one; me want one more."

"Oh, Dolly, fie!" he said with a pleased sort of smile; "how can grandad make so many?"

Still he did not reprove her; but Mary darted upon us with a swift, strange glance of trouble in her face, seized the child, and shook her angrily.

"Naughty child, to dirty yourself in the brook again!" she said, and bore the culprit away into the house.

The old man frowned; then he smiled again, and turned to me. "She is a clever child, sir, a clever child," he repeated.

"It's not a nice game for a child to play at—drowning dolls!" I answered, in some disgust.

A curious look came into the old man's face, half frightened, half angry, half cunning; he was evidently vexed that I should blame his darling.

"She means no harm," he replied. "She doesn't understand, she's only a little 'un as doesn't understand."

He was so much annoyed at my severity to his pet that for several days afterwards he avoided rather than sought me; he remained digging in his garden when he might have come to talk at the bridge. It was only the rising of the water after more rain which—exciting him as it always did now—broke down his instinct of reticence.

"She's getting fuller," he said solemnly, leaning over the bridge-wall, and speaking as if the Raven had life and sought victims consciously; "she'll be as full to-night as last time; she'll have another soon."

"Pooh!" I said impatiently, trying to shake off the eerie impression which the old man's words had made on me; "there will be no accident here again; people are too careful now."

"She'll have another, sir," he repeated slowly; "she's had four already, and she'll have another yet."

"Four!" I repeated, and I don't know what impulse made me turn and look the old man full in the face. "I only know of three; who was the fourth?"

A dull stupid expression came over his features, which had been eager and excited before; perhaps he was vexed to find that old age had betrayed him into error on the subject which interested him most; but there was something a little curious and suspicious in his very look of stupidity, as if he had a lurking doubt that I might be going to take Mary's part and prove him imbecile and foolish.

"Three! three! did I say four?" he answered slowly; "yes, three! there was Timothy Wake, and Jim Dixon, and—and—" he paused and rubbed his head with his hands, looking in a perplexed way up the stream.

"Who was next?" I persistent, moved to this questioning by an impulse I did not understand.

"Next?" he repeated slowly, turning his eyes towards me, "next? There was Davy Miller; yes, Davy Miller next."

"And who was number four?" I insisted.

"Number four?" he repeated with doggedness, "there were three; there were three. Who said there were four?"

He turned and left me, walking slowly, and lifting his cap to rub his head as he went, like a man much bothered in his mind; and I heard him muttering, "Timothy Wake, and Jim Dixon, and Davy Miller; that makes three—that makes three. Who said there were four? I never did."

Evidently he took the lapse of memory very much to heart.

The rain continued to fall; the river continued to rise. I had begun to share the strange and foreboding interest which the dalesmen felt in the bridge at such times. A morbid curiosity drew me out again in the evening to look at the river rushing on in the darkness, surging with a pent-up rebellion between its stony banks.

I took a lantern with me and made my way to Meadow Bridge. From its arch I could hear the water rushing below me, but see little of it. I therefore walked along the wooden railing in the meadow and stood at the extremity of it, where the water was much nearer to me and likely presently to overflow the bank. I stooped a little to let my stick down, in order to measure the distance it still had to rise.

Just then a curious sensation came over me, as if some one stood very near me in the darkness. I straightened and stiffened myself instantly, turned round and flashed the light of my lantern on the figure of old Matthew Gibson.

He wavered a little as if startled, then caught at me and tried to pull me violently away from the water. I was already safe enough, standing firm as a rock to resist any danger; but I suppose he did not think so.

"What are you doing here?" he said in a hoarse voice; "this is no place to play with."

"What are *you* doing here?" I repeated angrily, "coming to startle a man till he falls into the river."

"I came to warn you, sir," he answered trembling at my emotion and his own. "I didn't know who it was, but I saw the lantern go down past the railing and I knew it wasn't safe."

"It was not safe for you to come on me suddenly in the dark like that," I declared, thoroughly angry at the folly of the old man; "I was safe enough before. Go home and get to bed; you are not fit to be about a place like this."

He looked at me then with a lurid and angry light in his eyes, and I began to feel ashamed of my rudeness to an old man who meant well, and had come, as he thought, to my assistance. I walked with him to his own door, saw him in, and then strode away along the road, for the first time avoiding the bridge and feeling that there was some reason, as yet but dimly understood, for its ugly reputation.

CHAPTER V.

DOLLY'S MISFORTUNE.

I WALKED into Meadow Cottage the next day, and found Matthew Gibson as friendly as ever; but a disagreeable impression lurked in my mind concerning him. His interest in the bridge was too intense, too morbid to be pleasant; it went far beyond his neighbours' in its fervour. I remembered the rumour I had heard of the chalk marks behind his door, and took the opportunity of looking to see if any such existed. The kitchen door had none, certainly, but the idea of them haunted me, and when I had asked Mary for a glass of milk, as my habit was, and she went into the back kitchen to get it, I followed her there. The door between the two rooms was open as usual, but a

touch with my foot half-closed it behind me, and I saw what I wanted to see. There were chalk crosses on the back of it, and the number was four.

I cannot tell why this impressed me with such an intense unpleasantness, an unpleasantness so strong that I was glad to walk straight on into the sunshine of the back-garden, and sit down there. Mary followed me with the glass of milk; she had no look of fresh trouble or of painful consciousness in her face, but when I went back through the cottage the door between the two rooms was again set wide open, so that the crosses were not visible.

No more rain fell till late that afternoon, but the river kept up a strong and steady flow, fed by the many streams from the valleys opening into Scardale, and by the mountain sides themselves, which sent down rivulets in every direction.

Just as dusk was falling, I sat alone in my little room. I was musing on recent impressions, and was conscious of a strong sympathy with Mary Gibson in her home at Meadow Bridge. I had begun to share the feeling which had at first seemed to me unreasonable, and to think that I also should dislike living near a spot which accident, or the shadow of it, seemed to haunt. Unexpectedly my landlady threw open the door, and announced in the loud voice of unpleasant surprise, "Here's that naughty Dolly Gibson says she's come to see you, sir, and wants a goody—shape of a fish-like you gave her before."

Dolly herself followed this announcement, hatless and rather wet, for a fine rain was beginning to fall, but wholly unabashed, and explaining her presence with much satisfaction:

"Mary gone to see Missee Tyson; take home Missee Tyson frock; Dolly come for lollipop."

I administered first a scolding then the lollipop, Dolly's easy impudence completely overpowering my sense of moral fitness. I could not attempt to mete out justice to this youthful transgressor, feeling sure that a young lady who found amusement in drowning her dolls was not likely to receive with much respect any punishment which I might bestow on her.

"However she's to be got back, sir, I don't know," grumbled Mrs. Timson, "and she can't go in the dark past that awful bridge, let alone over it; and Mary'll be just mad with fright if she gets back from Mrs. Tyson's, and finds her not there."

"I'll take her," I answered, "it will be a pleasant walk."

I rose with an alacrity which surprised myself, apparently glad of a good reason for another look at the swollen river, which attracted as it repulsed me. Motherly Mrs. Timson wrapped the culprit Dolly in a shawl of her own, and we started together through the gloom.

Just as we entered the field-path, which I chose, because its shortness might enable us to reach the cottage before Mary could return and discover Dolly's absence, I was stopped by John Edge, who wanted to ask further particulars about an easel which I had commissioned him to repair.

I explained as rapidly as I could, but there was a little difficulty in showing clearly what I wished to be done. In the ardour of making my meaning plain, I did not notice that I dropped Dolly's hand, or that she slipped it from mine; when I

turned to go on, the child was no longer beside me.

"Dolly's gone!" I explained with a quick feeling of uneasiness; "she must have run on while we were talking."

"Was that Dolly Gibson under the big shawl?" asked John Edge in surprise. "How stupid of me not to know her! I'll go with you, and catch her up."

We strode on together through the gloom, expecting every minute to overtake the child, and calling her at intervals. Our steps were as rapid as they could be without running; we feared, by going faster, to miss the naughty little creature; for she might, with some mischievous idea of frolic, be concealing herself near the path. As we left the lights of the town behind us the darkness became deeper, but our eyes soon grew accustomed to it, and then we were able to see to a greater distance than when perplexed by gleams from various directions. We were half a field off the river before caught sight of Dolly; then we saw Meadow Bridge rising darkly before us, with the flying figure of the mischievous child making straight for it. She stumbled at intervals on Mrs. Timson's shawl, which was much too long for her; but her instincts were leading her safely enough along the well-marked path to the well-walled bridge. We both forbore to call out to her, lest a new impulse of mischief should lead her to turn aside. We strode on the more rapidly, John Edge breaking at last into a run, and we watched her disappear into the blackness of the bridge.

The situation seemed void of danger then; but it changed all at once. We both of us saw at the same moment that old Matthew stood by the end of the railings, as I had stood at a later hour the night before, looking into the river. The child must have seen him too, for she suddenly re-appeared from the shadow of the bridge, and was by his side in a moment.

Matthew started violently; there was a wild cry from himself and the child; the next moment he caught the railings and leaned forward, violently trying to snatch something from the water. I knew that the something must be Dolly, for she was no longer beside him.

"The child is in the river! Dolly, Dolly, my Dolly!" he wailed desolately.

John Edge had already vaulted over the railing and plunged into the rushing stream. Both he and the child were carried rapidly away, while we—the old man and I—ran along the bank after them. At last, much lower down, where the trees bent over the water and lent their aid, John Edge, to my infinite relief, scrambled out with Dolly in his arms. We carried her back to the cottage, Matthew Gibson moaning and lamenting all the way. Mary had not yet come in, and we had to put the unconscious child to bed, and do the best we could to warm and revive her, old Matthew helping us with trembling fingers and trembled countenance. This disaster he realized fully enough.

At last the child opened her eyes, and they fell upon the anxious face of her grandfather. Her first speech was characteristic.

"Naughty grandad! push Dolly in water; naughty grandad, go drown poor Dolly!" and she began to cry violently.

"It isn't true, it isn't true. I tried to get her out," said the old man in tones of anguish, as he flung himself on his knees beside the "coastcheer" on which she lay. "Don't say it, Dolly; don't say it. Oh, sir, do you think I would hurt my little Dolly?"

I was sorry for the old man, whose trouble of mind was evidently great, and I answered—

"You meant no harm; but you should keep away from the river. You make accidents instead of preventing them, by hanging about it."

"I didn't know she was out; if I had seen her a minute sooner! but she had that shawl over her head, and when I snatched at her it was too late."

He did not speak very clearly in his distress, and the accident would certainly not have happened if he had been out of the way; but I could not be harsh with him at the moment, and I left him stroking the child's hands, and caressing her with murmured words of tenderness, while I went to meet Mary, and break the news to her. I was just in time to give her an explanation before she reached home, and I assured her that Dolly was all right, and could now suffer from nothing worse than a little cold; but Mary was deeply distressed.

"Dolly in the river! Oh, sir, I knew it would come. And—where was grandfather?" she asked earnestly.

"He was just too late to save her," I answered, making the best of the tale.

"Too late! Was he there?" she asked, stopping in the road to look at me. "I thought he was away down at Farmer Croft's."

She went on rapidly after that, and entered the cottage first; then she took Dolly up in her arms and kissed her passionately.

The old man rose and looked at her with an anger which I saw no reason for.

"Mary," he said, "never leave the child again like that; if you go away, take her with you; never leave her again."

"I never will," she answered, a sob catching her breath as she spoke; then she turned and looked at me—not at her lover, whose eyes she seemed to avoid, though they sought hers sympathetically—with such an expression of desolate misery and hopeless dread, that it haunted me all night afterwards.

CHAPTER VI.

NUMBER FOUR—AND FIVE?

Two nights after this Polly Fisher was drowned. She was a servant girl who had recently come from a distance to be housemaid in a gentleman's house in Scardale. She was therefore somewhat of a stranger to the place and its ways. Perhaps she had never heard of the tragic deaths at Meadow Bridge, and so had no fear of passing it after dark; or perhaps she expected to be scolded for lingering late.

She had been sent on a message to a farm on Ravenscar, and had remained there gossiping for some time; she had probably, therefore, preferred to cross the ill-omened bridge rather than delay longer her time of reaching home.

Her body was found the next morning not far

from the bridge, and the farmer's wife gave evidence as to the hour at which she left the farm. No one else seemed to have seen her afterwards.

Matthew Gibson busied himself as usual in this case, although he had had nothing to do with the finding of the body. He attended the inquest and listened eagerly to all that was reported there. His eyes grew bright and fixed, like those of a listening bird, as he heard his neighbours say how it must have happened; and he tramped home to his cottage afterwards with an air of subdued but watchful excitement. Mary, meanwhile, remained at home, moving about in the cottage with a paler countenance than I had seen before. It seemed no longer to be token anxiety, but a settled trouble and a patient endurance. She kept the cottage door shut, as if she feared the entrance of neighbours, or the exit of Dolly. I thought she was sorry even to see me, when an interest stronger than curiosity drew me there; she gave me a chair politely enough, but she went on with her work almost in silence.

Her manner put me at a certain distance, and made me feel that there was a degree of meanness in my resolution to see again those crosses behind the back kitchen door. The consciousness of my real sympathy with her, and that of my desire to befriend rather than injure her, encouraged me, however, to persist in my intention; and when Dolly called me into the back room to look at a kitten, I very promptly went. The kitten was hiding in a corner, and on the door the crosses were still marked; this time there were five.

I said nothing to anyone of this observation that I had made—I could not call it a discovery—but I thought of it all the more. If the old man, by means of these crosses, chronicled the number of deaths at Meadow Bridge, why had he made there the same mistake that he made in talking to me? Why had he left it unrectified afterwards? and even certified, as it were, to its correctness, by now adding another cross, making the number five instead of four. Had he some knowledge beyond that of the rest of the world of what happened at Meadow Bridge? a knowledge which he must be disinclined to share with others, for when I corrected his number four, he accepted the correction at once.

I had, of course, no certainty that the crosses on the back of the door had anything to do with the cases of drowning at the Bridge; but the coincidence was, at least, remarkable. I forbore to distress Mary Gibson by any inquiry about them. If she had even permitted herself to speak of her grandfather's habit of chalking them there, she evidently preferred to be silent now. I thought all the more, however, because I had, as yet, no definite information from which to speak to others; and I began to watch the bridge and study the old man to a degree which would have justified the statement that I was as much bewitched by the spot as old Matthew himself.

Mary used to see me coming and going, but she talked to me less than before; she kept the cottage door shut, with Dolly inside. Once only she spoke to me, in a quiet tone of inquiry, about my frequent visits to the place.

"You come here a great deal, sir; there are prettier bridges in the vale than this; don't you know of them?"

I did not think, however, that she absolutely

disliked my coming; she seemed to have a great confidence in my personal caution, which prevented her feeling so uneasy about the danger of the bridge with regard to me as with regard to others; for I had heard her speak quite angrily to boys who would linger there to play or to fish.

A long spell of rainless weather followed the last accident. The first frost of the season set in, a fine dry frost, which bound up the little becks in their courses, and so permitted the larger streams to fall away and trickle like mere brooks along their half-abandoned beds. The stepping stones stood out tall and dry, hardly needed by any one who wished to cross the stream at that point. The river ran low under the arch of Meadow Bridge, harmless and sleepy, as if abandoning its zeal for progress, and feeling it hardly worth while to go any further where so few tributaries came to help. The lake itself, which it joined half a mile away, sank lower and lower, exposing pieces of beach, which had not been uncovered for months.

Even this spell of fine weather did not protect Scardale from the fate which connected it now so persistently with disaster. Near the mouth of the river, where it wandered towards the lake through quiet meadows and a bit of pebbly beach, was left dry beneath a jutting rock crowned with fir-trees. The rock might have been an island once; now it looked like an out-port of the hilly land behind, which had gone forward to meet and greet the lake. In the angle formed by its advance, where the water had swirled and seethed in the rainy weather, and now the worn pebbles lay piled together, the body of a man was found, half buried in the debris, which the floods had brought down.

He had evidently been drowned some weeks before; he must have been a stranger to the place, for no one had missed him; his dress appeared to be that of a tourist; his knapsack was still strapped to his shoulder.

The sensation caused by this discovery surpassed that of any made before, for the lake itself seemed now likely to be involved in the evil fame of the bridge.

At the inquest a juryman asked if it was possible for the man to have been carried down to the stream so far from Meadow Bridge, the place where the other accidents had occurred. The general opinion seemed to be that it was possible, in such high floods as had visited the valley in the autumn. There was a great talk about the affair, and a suggestion that Meadow Bridge should be closed rather than that accidents should continue to occur there, to the misfortune of individuals and the discredit of the valley. But this suggestion fell through, the bridge being such a convenient short cut to the town from the houses on and under Ravenscar, and being besides so apparently secure in its structure and well-guarded in its surroundings. Every one felt vaguely that there was a missing-link somewhere in the chain of circumstances connecting the bridge with the cases of drowning. No sufficient explanation of the repeated accidents had yet been found; and, though they were necessarily put down as deaths by misadventure, the precise nature of the misadventure had to be discovered before there could be reasonable hope of closing the list and restoring the valley to a sense of

security. The publicity given to the last case, and the inquiries made concerning it, led to the discovery that the body was that of a clerk from a distant city, who had left home on a holiday and never returned. As it was found, after his disappearance, that he had run considerably into debt, his friends and employers had concluded that he must have absconded to avoid his creditors.

I met old Matthew coming with a brisk step from the inquest, and stopped him to ask rather sternly—

“Is this number four?”

“Number four, sir?” he repeated, looking at me observantly between half-closed lids; “this makes five altogether, sir, now.”

I said no more, but took an early opportunity of looking at the crosses behind the door. Their number remained the same, no new one was added.

(To be continued.)

THE NET OF DEATH.

*T*HE breeze blows soft and the waves are still,
And the sunlight lies on the emerald hill
That many have climbed with panting breath
And wild dark eyes, for pitiless Death
In the tremulous flakes of the gold has spread
His nets, small-meshed, strong-corded, and red
With the blood of the slain that soundly sleep
In the nethermost depths of the silent deep.

As he lurks in his lonely desolate den,
A noble vessel sails into his ken
With her freight of souls and her conscious might.
“Away with you, Pleasure! away, Delight!
And Love to lure and to dazzle the eyes,
And baleful Beauty to deck the skies!”
Then trusting them all to the care of Fate,
He patiently sits him down to wait.

Alas! proud ship, though the rainbows glance
In a myriad gems on your stately dance,
Where the sunlit ripples with loving caress
That merrily mocks at your loftiness,
Are playing around you as you glide
Through the gossamer threads on the golden tide,
Yet a silvery voice sings soft and sweet,
“You dance o'er the dead with careless feet.”

Ah! little you think, as you toss in air
With a haughty disdain your flaxen hair,
That the murmuring breeze is the Syren's breath,
And the kiss you love is the kiss of Death.
Sad and low is the lullaby song
That gently rocks the vessel along;
Like lightning, glitter the fangs of Fate
And fasten on her and her quivering freight.

The breeze blows soft and the waves are still,
And the sunlight lies on the emerald hill
Where the tremulous flakes of the gold are spread.
Alas, proud ship! She is laid with the dead,
And solitude broods o'er the tomb where they sleep
In the nethermost depths of the silent deep,
For the Net of Death and his traitorous band
Are dragged to the shores of the Unknown Land.

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EDITED BY F. W. ROBINSON.

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LONDON: OCTOBER 3, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER I.

BACHELOR'S HALL.

"OH, you are in, Tom!"

The speaker advanced into the room—a cosy bachelor's room, a room not without adornment, for some photographs graced the walls, notably the "Huguenot" and the "Black Brunswicker." The rest were groups in which the owner figured, or views of snuggeries or localities where the owner had visited or wandered. Draughts were met sternly by an ominous screen, which the owner had commenced bravely to fill up. Sickening of his task, one side still remained dense; and the other—why, like fruit in a stingy housewife's loaf, the pictures and faces might be said to call to each other. There was little else to attract the eye, unless it was a goodly collection of books in one chimney corner, and a museum of pipes and the other necessities of a smoker deposited without precision on the mantel-shelf.

"What a fellow you are," continued the speaker; "the life you lead is worse than the burial service. I tapped at the door—no answer."

"You wish to infer that I bury myself alive? You have hinted at that before," returned the owner of the room, without turning his head or raising his eyes from the book he held. Sitting, or rather reclining in an American chair, Tom Aylmer had at the first moment escaped young Dick Devensey's observation. Aylmer, having come to the end of his paragraph, looked up. "But, Dick," pleaded he, "I must have a little rest sometimes. I have been on foot all the day."

"And I have come disturbing your *dolce far-*

niente. A yellow French novel, I do declare!" exclaimed the incursive talker. "A man of your soberness and gravity! Well, wonders never cease; you will be giving up the anthem next." Dick became more serious. "Now, Tom, I could fancy you becoming a disciple of Comte or Kant, or some of those German fellows; you are one of the hard-headed sort. That will never be the case with me. I haven't the remotest idea of their doctrines. I can't understand their verbiage. If I see their names anywhere it is quite sufficient for me. I may give it up, for I shall not understand what I am reading. What have you got?"

"Oh, a very sober story," said Aylmer, evasively. "It cost me fourpence in the Bail; it can wait, it is my own." So saying, Aylmer tossed the book aside. "With a borrowed book," continued he, "it is different. I always feel that I must read it with dispatch and return it. You have not disturbed me, Dick. I am glad whenever you do come in. I allow myself an hour of idleness over a pipe or a cigar every night before I turn in; but the hour is like sunshine—somewhat irregular, sometimes it doesn't come at all. My few patients have a special fondness for fetching me out of an evening."

"The glorious result of being a medicine man—and to such a prospect am I doomed," returned Dick Devensey, gloomily. Dick's face was melancholy enough for "Oh, misery!" "A fire at this time of the year," bewailed he in the same breath. "What dull weather it is. We have had no summer yet, and there seems no prospect either of sunny days. Picnics will be shelved, out-door dances, lawn-tennis."

Dick stared moodily at the too cheerful coal, and there was a silence of some moments, broken at last by a laugh from the philosopher in the cane chair, a white curl of smoke issuing from his lips.

"What a nuisance it must be!" murmured Aylmer pathetically, rising to his feet and eyeing the disconsolate Dick with amusement. But Dick's eyes would not meet Aylmer's.

One is not compelled to be a slave to ridiculous prejudice. In Treminter, Aylmer had the misfortune to be considered a very uninteresting person. No one could conscientiously impugn his character, but he had his share of detractors. Being honest and outspoken when he did open his mouth to speak, not easily led or driven, pride and stubbornness were laid at his door. According to some of his judges, bearishness and crass temper were his predominant traits. But as Aylmer stood, his expression and appearance belied such criticism. The curve of humour about his lips was taking, if a little cynical. He had an honest face, and his skin was so clear and fair a lady might have envied him his complexion. His eyes were of the palest blue, and his light hair thick and wavy, and disposed to curl crisply about his neck. As for his beard it was somewhat lighter and brighter in hue, and he was wont to flatter himself that his moustache was fiery-red. There was not an element of bearishness in his demeanour or an awkward trait in his movements. Without being remarkably easy in manner, one was assured that he could be courteous if fairly met. It could not be doubted that he was a person refined and intelligent, but, like many a bookish man, somewhat abrupt in address. In fine, young Doctor Aylmer was not at all a dashing blade, but a blonde young fellow of thirty or so any unprejudiced person could look at again, think well of, though perhaps consider a little too self-contained. Dick Devensey—not a mischief-maker—sometimes could enlighten his friend with current opinion. Aylmer would laugh, too, with a tinge, Dick was sometimes fain to think—with just a slight tinge of superiority.

"Hard words break no bones, Dick, and I bear no malice," the philosopher would remark calmly.

Few were they who really understood the quiet book-loving fellow; only a few guessed at the warmth of heart and generous sympathies of the hermit crab. The ordinary run of people wondered at the close intimacy of the two. Aylmer was certainly but a young man, but Dick Devensey was a boy; he had not attained his majority. The difference in character, temperament, was startling. Dick—oh Dick Devensey was a light-hearted fellow, frank, open as the winds; no harm in him you know—Aylmer, oh,—there was a shrug—well, he might be good enough to hold water for Dick—worthless though he might be—to wash in.

Dick had by this time ensconced himself opposite his friend's vacated chair, and settled into a not particularly graceful attitude. He had also unsolicited assisted himself to one of Aylmer's cigars, and the free and easy caller now looked across at Aylmer so imperturbably one would never have supposed that a thought crossed his mind that he was elsewhere than in Liberty Hall. But it showed that their friendship was an easy one; that neither was disposed to be hypercritical of the other. Dick brought Aylmer the town's gossip, enlightened him on various social matters stirring, broke the monotony of Aylmer's bachelor life, and Dick was made free of Aylmer's room and what it contained.

"I've taken one of your cigars," remarked Dick.

"That is quite understood," returned the other quietly.

"No, but I do think I come it strong on you,

Aylmer," contested Dick, a shred of conscience left in him. "I come in here as if there was no bell; I startle you in your hours of contemplation—I have none"—Dick muttered *par parenthèse*; "I take one of your cigars—thanks," Aylmer handing him a spill. "Aylmer, you always have a good cigar for a fellow. I like your best chair, and you don't object to my planting my heels in another. At home I can only do so in the surgery, and then the gov. must be out. He hates idleness, I like it, but that is my weakness, everyone has a weakness. I have a liking for work that isn't work; cricket's hard work, but it never bores me, no more does football or shooting; fishing is a lazy occupation compared to them, but when the others fail I can take up comfortably with it. The old Adam is desperately rampant in me. I think I'm like Pierre, don't you remember, 'I don't like work, it tires me.' Am I to take my heels out of your chair; if you are thinking of sitting down, I will?"

"No, I don't mind my furniture, I don't know the separate value of each chair. They were all enduring some species of rickets when I came into possession."

"I think," said Dick, with the air of a connoisseur, "this is a somewhat better brand than the last, or better seasoned."

"Same cigars as when you were in last," said Tom laughing. Dick invariably praised the cigar, having a somewhat similar criticism when he imagined a new box was opened. "I thought you were going to Lady Mary Footitts to-night?"

"So I am, but Cicely wasn't ready, so I slipped out, left word I had a short engagement, but would get back by the time she was ready. I don't care so much for going there; I would rather come here and chat with you, but you're so like a machine, Tom; when your hour's up you begin to grind again. If I had not caught you in the act I should have remained in the dark, heathenish ignorance of believing that you had no carnal appetite; that those detestable quartos, folios, anatomical, physiological, tracts, pamphlets, plates, absorbed your whole being, that you knew more of a human being's mechanism than Nature. Happy delusion! There is the accumulation of half a century in our house; the gov. pretends to read them as he continues acquiring. I don't pretend, and I don't read—"

"What shall you do, Dick?" asked Aylmer seriously; "you ought to look forward a little."

"I don't know," returned Dick with rebellious carelessness; "something will turn up, a golden-haired damsel with golden charms will be captivated."

"Nonsense, Dick, don't flatter yourself."

"I know you are in a band with the rest," complained Dick. "I can see condemnation in our dispenser's eyes: 'Oh, what a shocking thing it is Mr. Richard takes no pleasure in contemplating the brilliant future before him, the best practice for twenty miles round; he ought to be framing now to eclipse his father in pathological'—no, what is the word, Aylmer, you have them all at your finger ends—but don't, I shall forget it if you do. Now be honest, Tom, and say whether you read a novel for the simple love of amusement, or merely to whet your appetite for, or solace your mind after severe studies?"

"Dick, my dear fellow, I like a good novel as well as you do, and I like amusement too; you

don't know what a terrible being I am when I break loose. But my dear fellow, don't get into speculations about me; think of yourself. I am a dull fellow in comparison with you. I often wish I had some of your brightness and bonhomie."

"Well," said Dick candidly, "most people do look upon you as a bit of a bear."

"I believe they do, Dick. No doubt they wonder at you having the courage to bait the bear in his den."

"To beard the bearded bear," roared Dick *basso profondo*. "Bidlake—"

"But Dick, nonsense aside, you ought to be doing something. If anything happened to the doctor, you ought to be ready to fill his place."

"Oh, I shall start fair some day," said Dick half-convincing himself with his own seriousness. "I wish though it had been ordained for me to be something else. I think I should have been better at something where there was a hod or a shovel. I think my brains are in my muscles. The mater said this morning it was high time I did something, so I went into the garden to pull the weeds out of her seedlings, I thought that would please her—by Jove, I wonder if I got the seedlings? A few weeks ago I thought I would do the kitchen garden a good turn. I had noticed a patch which looked as if a spade would do it good—fine exercise, you know, digging; groom only just arrived in time to save the asparagus bed. It is a dreadful thing to be ignorant I do believe, it is a desperate thing when the ignoramus is healthy and strong, I think society and *bon vivants* gain by such fellows as I remaining idle."

"You are a droll fellow, Dick," said Aylmer hopelessly; "I like your company, my dear fellow, but how about that sister of yours? I am afraid she will think you long."

"Oh, let her wait," said Dick carelessly, "she often keeps me waiting. You are so plaguey conscientious."

In Tom Aylmer's eyes Cicely Devensey was not nearly so amiable as her brother. A clever person once suggested that would-be lovers before involving themselves inextricably would do well to cultivate the acquaintance of the brothers of the fair one, and discover what metal they were made of. Cicely Devensey in features resembled her brother, most certainly not in character and temperament. Tom Aylmer ventured upon a remonstrance, but Dick treated it quite cavalierly.

"I don't care much for Lady Mary," said Dick with grave candour, tapping his forehead; "a little touched here, getting childish, says deuced unpleasant things to a fellow's face. I don't care so much what she says about me or to me—I am quite case-hardened you know—but then Edith laughs, and somehow I don't care for her to laugh at me; when she laughs with me it is another matter. She thinks I don't see her laugh always, sometimes she turns away, but I know what she is thinking, that it is all true what old Lady Mary says, and that no one else would or dare come out so straight as she does."

Dick looked concerned at the idea of Edith Heron having but an indifferent opinion of him, and Tom Aylmer's eyes were fixed intently upon Dick's face. It was as if his soul was in deep sympathy with Dick's lament. The interested expression seemed to arouse Dick.

"You look as concerned—why my dear fellow I don't care so much for what the old woman says, after all."

Aylmer felt a little embarrassed; he was not so much in sympathy with Dick; something else had stirred him—the sound of a name in his ears. Aylmer recovered himself, and said a little hypocritically—

"But then it hurts you a little, Dick?"

"It doesn't hurt me sufficiently," laughed Dick bitterly. "It is not Edith I care for so much when Lady Mary is lecturing me in her odd, abrupt way, after all," continued Dick, savagely, lapsing into silence.

Tom Aylmer was silent; Dick had not yet unbosomed himself. Dick's confidence never wanted forcing, it was always policy to wait. But in this short interval, it was unreasonable Aylmer knew, but something like an envious pang shot through his heart. Was Dick in love with Edith Heron? She was considerably Dick's senior. Aylmer knew it was common enough for a lad to fall madly in love with a ripe, mature woman. Aylmer's better sense told him, so far as Dick was concerned, such a jealousy was ill-directed, besides, he had no moral right to such a feeling; he was barely upon speaking terms with the lady. Dick soon dispelled the shadow of a suspicion.

"I've often wished," said the ingenuous fellow, "Edith had been my sister instead of Cicely, and Cicely the old woman's grand-niece. I would be a willing party to an exchange as it is. If I were as old as you, Tom, I should go in for Edith Heron, she is a jolly nice girl, you might do much worse I can tell you."

Aylmer smilingly shook his head.

"Hit somewhere else? oh, well"—murmured Dick with resignation.

"Wrong again," said Aylmer with a short laugh, a little forced.

"Ah, then, I expect you will go through the wood and pick up the crooked stick. Wasn't I saying I wouldn't mind so much Edith laughing at me? It's another person, a *person*," emphasized Dick, "that confounded fellow who has come to the organ now Dr. Olde is away; I suppose he will be a permanency if they can come to an arrangement with the Olde fellow. It's just here, Aylmer, whenever Lady Mary says anything rude about me, this fellow laughs in his sleeve as silently as the grave. I swear I'll throw him out of the window some of these nights."

"Why, said Aylmer amused; "if you can put up with Edith's silent laughter, why not with his?"

"He enjoys it in his low way. I know he's a miserable sneak. Edith is simply amused at her aunt; all the time I know she has a little sympathy for a worthless fellow. He is one of those mean, proper fellows who work hard and never are so base as to live on anyone else, as I do," said Dick desperately.

"You are hitting at me now," said Aylmer mischievously. "What do some people say of me?—I only know what you say."

"Bah!" exclaimed Dick disdainfully, "you're not one of his sort, you don't go down the street with a goody grin on your face."

"How has he got acquainted with the people in the Close?"

"It's the music—don't you see. He is a *protégé* of the Dean's, or of the Dean's wife; she has introduced him there. Edith Heron is a fine musician; our Cicely will never hold a candle to her—by-the-by, Edith is going to the Deanery, coach up those two little girls, and that fellow's always about the Deanery. The fact is, Tom, it is the Dean's wife; she is making up a match, and she has half persuaded Lady Mary it would be a good thing. Since that scoundrel nearly ruined Lady Mary things are not very flourishing in the Close. Edith has nothing to hope for I understand; that long lawsuit robbed her of an inheritance. But go with me to Lady Mary's?" proposed Dick coolly.

"I can't do that," answered Aylmer, "you see I never had a proper introduction to either."

"I'll introduce you."

Aylmer shook his head.

"Not good enough," suggested Dick drearily, "you think an introduction from me only a so-so recommendation. Savour of long pipes and October. Well, I must accept the rebuke," added Dick melodramatically, "it is well merited I know."

"Nothing of the kind, Dick. I don't go out, you know that, and—I am known to none, born to blush unseen. Don't you think, Dick, it would be an outrageous undertaking on my part—besides I don't shine in society, I have no latent talent, rather inclined to be the wet blanket."

"Your own fault, you bury yourself alive in this den of yours and don't try to make the acquaintance of anyone."

"I haven't your easy way——"

"You ought to have then," interrupted Dick, "a man of your age, a professional man ought to be at his ease anywhere."

"That is not it—it's out of the question going, with me that is. I believe Lady Mary is a good old lady, and I have a great respect for Miss Heron, she is so attentive to her relative."

"The polite letter writer! [Now I was only talking to Desforges; now you like Desforges, and he thinks you ought to rate yourself higher than you do. He says you know something of everything, and he finds you good company.]

"I am glad," said Aylmer, smiling, "to hear I stand so well in the good opinion of Desforges."

"He is a jolly fellow is Desforges, he gets on well with everybody. I often think he gets on better with some people than the pater does. The gov. is rather stiff and masterful with the patients, unless they happen to be swells d'ye see. Now, Desforges, always has his joke with them, and they like it. We needn't stick up for pride when Desforges can unbend. We are nobodies, our grandfather was a commonplace individual, as I am given to understand; I can never make out really what he was. Aylmer, I have often thought about you; I have thought there must be a method in your madness living so to yourself, your name is not a common one. There is an old Aylmer connected with the Tremainster bank; I've heard Lady Mary talk of him—an old flame of hers I dare wager a thousand pounds to a gooseberry. He is a baronet too—do you claim kinship?"

"I might claim kinship, Dick, but he might pooh-pooh my claim." Aylmer had a bantering smile, but he regarded Dick curiously if not uneasily. "There would be the original Aylmer,

no doubt, but in the course of a couple of hundred years the kinship would become exceedingly remote. You don't look upon all the Devenseys in England as cousins, eh, Dick? Besides my grandfather might have taken a fancy to the name and adopted it."

"You're a 'dark fellow—the coolest hand at dodging a quiz or staving off an unwelcome topic, or shelving impertinent questions."

"You have not been impertinent, Dick, have you? The Aylmers of Chesterton are connections of mine, but what better am I for that?"

"Well," said Dick at last, "I suppose I shall have to go, I would much rather stay though. What a capital idea it is, this footstool holding a cigar box, none would suspect it. Is it worth while going now? I've a mind to stay if I am not in the way."

"You are then, Dick. I had forgotten your sister, you must go, Dick, I must not encourage you in such unbrotherly conduct."

"Oh Cicely wouldn't care about putting me about."

"You must go, Dick, and soon. I don't want to throw you out of the window——"

"Well, think better of it, go with me?"

"That is impossible. I must get to some work."

"Work!" ejaculated Dick, in despair, "I envy you your appetite and your steam. Last time I went up I was plucked, instead of sticking to my subject, my head was full of the Gaiety piece, now I couldn't help that. Confounded foolish I know, but I got mixed. I never shall pass, I know. The pater looks on all my time in London as sheer wasted."

"You would get through it if you had more faith in yourself. You got to be a fair player on the violin, until you heard Withering you really worked hard, after you heard him then you became despondent, and began to pretend you didn't care for music. You are an odd fellow, Dick."

"Aylmer, it is just this with me, I can sketch a little, play the violin a little, do several things to amuse myself, or please a few friends who are not critical, but there is nothing I am first-rate in, or, what is more, ever shall be. It will be always so with me. Well, tata, if you won't come along with me, I shall have to endure the cynic; with you I thought I should have been able to suppress him. There is no love between us I can tell you, someday it will be pistols for two and coffee for one, mark my words."

"Don't be rash, Dick!"

"You might rival him, Aylmer!" persisted Dick, "Edith Heron is the jolliest of jolly girls. I wish you would. I would come and see you after you were married, that would be fine, you know."

"You are speaking one for me and two for yourself. Here, get out of this—I can get along with you until it comes to balderdash."

But as Dick's foot was firmly planted, Tom Aylmer found some difficulty in closing the door.

"I am a true prophet—you will regret missing such a fine opportunity"—Dick paused a moment, then added with mock seriousness, "it is not too late!"

"Go!" Aylmer relapsed into his chair, as if with the determination that whatever Dick might now say must fall upon deaf ears.

The house door closed, and as the crunch of Dick Devensley's feet on the gravel ceased, Aylmer did feel himself a hermit, and a sad almost gloomy expression settled on his face. He sat moodily in his chair, thoughts would crowd upon him. It was not good for a human being to live so much alone, a solitary life was joyless. A second cigar, a somewhat unusual course for him when a pipe solaced him equally well, did not bring him more cheerful thoughts. A decided case of the dismals it was with him. Dick was right, he was a most unsociable being. He, Tom Aylmer, had not earned unjustly the soubriquet of a bear. He had thought too little of society, too much of his books and his profession. What had such close attention brought him, not a rapidly developing practice certainly. Does it not often come to the absorbed professional man, to the unflitting man of letters, to every honest striver intent upon his work, that he toils and toils for little. That the careless vagabond has been enjoying life, having a much happier time of it, even outstripping the plodder in the race? No, he had not the manners to interest a refined lady, he had not the "go" to rivet her attention or gain her smile. Yet he knew that he had a tender susceptible heart, knew that his heart was disposed—but laugh, he would never have the ghost of a chance, his diffidence and his scant appreciation of himself would go against him. Now had he the assurance, no—it was impudence—of that newly imported prig of an organist. But it was foolish of him accepting Dick's estimate of a fellow he had barely seen. Where were his thoughts leading him?

Edith Heron! Aylmer closed his eyes. He would fain shut out that sweet face with its wealth of rich brown hair. Even with his eyes closed, the half parted lips, the subdued glance, the modest intelligence of the eyes, were photographed on his brain. He had idealized her in many a day dream. Face and figure as she walked to morning service, her dress, the simplest and yet the most chaste; her walk, it was an angel's tread. What more could he think, it was a wordless soliloquy, running upon a perfect woman, winning and gracious. His mind carried him to the contemplation of another being which set his teeth on edge and something that was a smothered expletive found its way to his lips. It was sacrilege! The Dean's wife was at this vulgar fellow's back. Was such a pearl to be sacrificed to the matchmaking propensities of such a woman? *Parvenus* both! Aylmer savagely tossed his cigar into the grate. He was certainly ill-tempered. Pacing up and down the hearthrug, the circumscribed limit did not tend to improve his temper. However, after a time he became calmer, he began to think how absurd it was of him to be vexed and put out. He was not Miss Heron's guardian or *fidus Achates*; he was simply an outsider, of no standing socially and poor as a church mouse. He had nothing to offer a woman, certainly not a home worth having. Possibly Miss Heron did not regard this—lover unfavourably, she would not see the defects so glaringly to poor prejudiced Dick. Aylmer shook his head dolorously. Dick hated the fellow for no other reason than that he fancied the new importation laughed at him in a sly way. And Aylmer almost went with Dick,

but Aylmer's unreason was fostered by the apparent fact that this young fellow possessed the tact and confidence he had not.

Aylmer would not believe that Edith Heron did love this fellow. He could not advance any premise for such an opinion, only that a few times he had observed them encounter each other, and he could not call to mind Edith Heron's face lighting up or becoming conscious at the approach of her acquaintance.

"I cannot think," mused he, "that she has any tenderness for him. He is not one, in my opinion, to impress a lady. A woman soon reveals to outsiders by a glance, a hesitation, a blush, the condition of her heart when the lover comes in sight."

Aylmer's thoughts did, indeed, become a little absurd. He would show people that he was not so much of a bear; he would cultivate music: the flute was not an indifferent instrument.

"Oh, bother!" muttered he, with a gesture. "A fellow does look foolish with a flute to his lips. I forgot, did Werter play the flute?"

Aylmer laughed aloud. He had often laughed at Desforges. How would the Tremenster folk take it, when in the summer nights dulcet sounds floated from the bear's garden, melancholy practisings of serenades? Then he became grave again. He would certainly commit some folly, if he did not put some severe check upon himself.

"I shall have to run away," he spoke aloud. "Dick is surmising too much about me, planning for me. Have I been canvassed at Lady Mary's? She knows all about me. I am not the heir to the baronetcy, thank goodness for that. I am but a hand-to-mouth kind of fellow, rather too poor, too odd, too proud. Fee-fo-fum! there is nothing for it but walking this honour off. Where is my stick—I must have another coat though. A walk as far as Hillenham Gorse will brace me up, take these vagaries out of my head."

He felt himself relieved even with the contemplation of a three-miles' stride under a lowering sky, facing an Egyptian darkness and a turbulent wind.

"It must be a necessity," he muttered to himself with a light laugh. "Any rational being would think I had had enough trotting for one day."

Aylmer scarcely had considered that his route lay through the minster precincts. He must even pass the corner house where Lady Mary Footitt lived. What had possessed him that he thought of Hillenham. He might just as well have decided upon any other outlying spot, taken a breather down and up the steep hill. But Hillenham had always been his favourite village, it was force of habit, the distance was always to his mind. Almost before he realized it, he found himself in the shadow of the "dream in stone," the beautiful cathedral. He lingered a moment. A man's ambitions, miseries seemed to him dwarfed here under this grave enduring pile. But he could not help lingering a moment. There she lived. It was a nest of comfort.

(To be continued.)

SECOND-HAND BOOK-SHOPS.

SECOND-HAND book shops are one of those institutions which illustrate the transitory character of our civilization. They are the compromise between the old and new in the trade of literature. They are one of the few relics of an age most of whose features are no more. Stage-coaches have been exterminated by the merciless rapine of the iron rails; the small, unpretentious inns have been supplanted by magnificent piles of busy and bustling hotels; and in the survival of the fittest, the social coffee-houses have gone to the wall. But amid the handsome shops wherein are set forth in attractive array the brand-new, dainty and flimsy volumes—which, still wet with the printer's ink, have just issued in myriads from the press, and, in obedience to the god of cheapness, are emblazoned with red-lettered tickets—the stout, ponderously-bound and largely-printed tomes of a generation ago still find a refuge in the dingy establishments which abound in still dingier streets.

And, although it may savour of conservative prejudice, we must confess to a fond affection for these establishments, their dinginess and general air of mildewy antiquity notwithstanding. The sight of one acts as a kind of magnet, in our street peregrinations. Like Leigh Hunt, we soon find ourselves "diving even into the sixpenny and threepenny 'box,'" and "in spite of eternal disappointment," we cannot pursue our journey until we have made in our mind a kind of inventory, more or less complete, of the literary wares exposed for sale. But when, with reluctant steps, we leave the collection of paper and print, we comfort ourselves with the thought that the diversion has not cost us wasted time. It has been a diagnosis of our mind. In turning up from the recesses of the "box," and in glancing at, books associated with "all sorts and conditions of men," originating in all ages and under all circumstances, our mind has been undergoing a constant inquisition into the depth and variety of its knowledge. In dipping again into the pages of Herodotus or of the Grecian poets, in meeting again with Plutarch or Josephus, in tasting again the sweets of the *Imitation of Christ* or the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in glancing again at Boswell or the Spectator, our mind is put under a discipline similar to that exerted by athletics over the body; and we are supplied with thoughts that occupy us until our destination is reached.

But an examination of the contents of the second-hand book-shop is in reality an occupation as exciting and entertaining as it is instructive. Expectation, it has been said, is the keenest of our pleasures, and it is as fully exercised in the employment of book-hunting as at fox-hunting, the card-table, or on the race-course. As we tumble one dusty volume over another, there is a kind of lottery as to which shall be favoured first, or favoured at all, with our hasty survey. To grasp "a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it is some kind-hearted play-book, then opening what seems its leaves, to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay; to expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find Adam Smith!" It is the repositories of the second-hand booksellers that cause us to really grasp the catholicism and multiplicity of the world's literature. "Papist and

Protestant side by side," one on another; "ancient and modern, Jew and Gentile, Mohammedan and Crusader, French and English, fighting their old battles silently now"—struggling to extort from their examiners the lucre at which they are valued by their purveyor!

Wrote Thackeray in *Pendennis* :—" If the secret history of books could be written, and the author's private thoughts and meanings noted down alongside of his story, how many insipid volumes would become interesting and dull tales excite the reader!" In our researches at old book-shops, we frequently find ourselves writing down in our minds this "secret history of books." An old Latin Grammar even, well-thumbed and soiled, suggests some "unwashed artificer" voluntarily struggling with its abstruseness, while toiling at some manual labour that occupied his hands but freed his head. A small collection of well-bound volumes of classic authors, and standard works, dispersed in different parts of the bookseller's store, but all inscribed with the name and college of some university student, elaborates a simple but stirring story—Youth, Poverty, Ambition, Book One; Resolution, Study, and Suffering, Book Two; Disappointment, Despair, and—Death, Book Three.

The brightly-dressed, clean-paged volumes, the products of the present—which occasionally become mingled with the sombre-looking, faded-print volumes, the products of the Past, brief as their career may have been from the press to the shop—the road to ruin that leads from the heavy price in the publisher's respectable circular to the paltry pittance in the second-hand bookseller's ragged catalogue—from the quiet exclusiveness of the publisher's shelves to the vulgar gaze of the street public—these also may have their "secret histories," appealing no less strongly to the compassionate imagination. What a world of confident hope, patient toil, expectant hours, sickening suspense, and dull despair may be represented in these few relics of the printer's art! When launched on the literary ocean they looked so strong, stalwart, and seaworthy, but have since been shattered and wrecked by the cruel winds of the critic's censure, and the public's coldness, ultimately to sink in the "waters of Lethe" of the second-hand book-shops, and then still to suffer the persecution of the heavy weights of the more ancient tomes! Here is a small volume which is all that is left as the result of months of labour, study, and anxiety on the part of some pale, ambitious, and untrained author, who, overcoming poverty, managed to make an appeal to the public's favour while still ignorant of the public's literary taste, and is now disappointed and unhappy, with lost heart and hope. It has just come into the bookseller's possession with batch of other unfortunates from some happy, volatile reviewer, who, after damning them with civil leer and pungent pen, and pocketing the guineas of his editor, enriches himself in the disposition of his victims.

But second-hand book-shops are suggestive of the Allegro side of life, as well as Pensero. It is in handling a well-bound work of a great author that we really appreciate the value to a people of a cheap literature. When we pick up a copy of some popular work—the *Vicar of Wakefield*, *Don Quixote*, or *Tristam Shandy*—that has lived

a life in excess of the allowed term of man, and is still in a green old age, possessed of strength and stability—that has not been kept in dusty idleness on the shelves of an ornamental library, but has from its birth been on active service and seen rough usage in the world—perhaps in some cheap circulating library—one cannot help reflecting on the good work accomplished by the single product of a man's genius and industry when incarnated in paper and print. This copy of the *Vicar* has been circulating from hand to hand for a far longer period than most coins of the realm. How many persons have handled its leaves and perused with eager haste its faded lines! How many has it solaced in sorrow, how many has it consoled in distress! To how many has it given intervals of genuine pleasure amid the pain of poverty! How much mental and physical suffering has it alleviated! What other possession of this world—what other article in the more gaily decked shops that surround the darksome book-shop has been the source of so much pure enjoyment—has been such a missionary of light and comfort?

It may be said that in these musings we are merely indulging in illusions—in investing dull realities with pleasant fancies. But then the whole of our pleasures are composed of illusions. The pleasures of fiction, the pleasures of poetry, the pleasures of music, the pleasures of the play—however startling it may be to admit it—would vanish were we secure against our illusions. All these things have a pleasure for us, because we associate them with the imaginative conceptions of our own mind.

"There is a class of street readers," wrote Charles Lamb, "whom I can never contemplate without affection—the poor gentry who, not having the wherewithal to buy a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls, the owner with his hard eye casting curious looks at them all the while, and wondering when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his edict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, 'they snatch a fearful joy.'" The time of which Elia wrote has passed away, the era of popular literature has succeeded, and learning, like commodities, has conformed to the law of "supply and demand." The poor gentry unable to buy a book have become an almost extinct race, but *habitués* of second-hand book-shops may still have their affection excited by street-readers who "snatch a fearful joy." Underpaid clerks and poor curates with a hankering for learned literature and a salary that will not admit of the purchase of works whose acquaintance has attractions for them, but which, in conformity with the economic law, do not descend to the vulgarity of paper covers, will be found thus partaking of the intellectual luxury in portions. Poor artisans, the demands of whose household leave only the pittance for the weekly paper, but the reading of which has inspired them with the desire to extend their intellectual possessions, and young servant-maids, who, having once tasted of the delights of *Pamela* or *Amelia*, dare their mistresses' scolding to dip deeper into the volumes as they pass the small suburban book-store—these are still to be met with in such wanderings to which the "gentle Elia" was so much addicted, and is it a confession of weakness to say them with a like feeling?

Scenes still more pathetic may be witnessed

in the darksome interior of the shop, where sits its keeper—frequently a bookish man himself, such as Leigh Hunt would have chatted with—who, having "seen the world," is now content to retire to a hermitage of books, with a scanty supply of physical food, but a plethora of mental. To such a man the second-hand book-selling business is most unprofitable, for he proceeds upon very different principles to the man who enters it merely as a lucrative occupation. He cannot treat harshly the poor curate, who in books lives and has his being, who now stands timidly negotiating the sale of a small but choice collection of a life-time, but which have now to be exchanged for bread. He is even disposed to ignore the true canons of commerce, and obtain the smallest minimum of profit. His customers are, for the most part, those most calculated to exite his sympathy—drinkers at the Pierian spring, who have to forego its pleasures in order to obtain more necessary but less delectable comestibles.

Second-hand book-shops have to us a romance of their own. They constitute one of the most interesting and attractive features of London streets. When in our street wanderings we come across a spot where stood one to which we were well known, but which now exists no more, we never fail to experience keen pangs of regret. Perhaps it has been succeeded by a more "modern" and palatial establishment—perhaps by a repository of "new books and new editions." If the latter, we feel as if our sorrow had been mocked, for what recompense for our loss is there in the long, uniform rows of smart volumes placed against the window-pane? They connect not the links of past and present, they have no reminiscences of interest and pathos to tell. They merely exemplify the spirit of the age—witnesses to the gospel of "buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market." Their pages are closed to the poor seekers of knowledge, and their gilt-lettered titles only suggest El Doradian dreams impossible of fulfilment.

FREDERICK DOLMAN.

AN APOLOGY.

HAD Nature made a bard in me
And granted with sweet poetry
My brain should teem,
My song should ever be of thee,
In loving lyrics thou shouldst be
Through all eternity,
My constant theme!

Thy beauty, love, alone I'd sing,
Through all the world thy praise should ring
In sweetest lays;
I'd be no laureate to a king,
Nor would I, wealth or fame to bring,
Pen anything
But in thy praise!

But, dearest, since my fate is hard,
Since Nature made me not a bard
Of wondrous style,
Oh, take the will, love, for the deed:
When my poor verses thou dost read
Pity my need
And grant a smile!

HORACE MILLS.

HOME CHIMES.

FOUND DROWNED.

BY RITSON STEWART.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPICIONS HALF UTTERED.

MARY GIBSON had almost shut the door in my face the morning after the inquest. She had been looking up the road for her father's return, when I approached in another direction; turning casually round she saw me coming, and instead of waiting to greet me with a smile and a pleasant word, she went inside at once. When I reached the porch it presented to me the blank and inhospitable front of a door carefully shut.

In the afternoon, however, when I passed again, Dolly ran out and invited me in. Mary said but little, moving about the kitchen with a reticent look, as if a glance or a word might betray her to a confidence she dreaded. The old man was there too, making a toy for the child; but the aspect of the place was sombre, wanting the sunshine of cheerfulness. The very kitten seemed frightened, and had again hidden behind the back kitchen door; while a forsaken doll—whom Dolly had perhaps been forbidden to drown—lay under a chair in an attitude which expressed sympathy with the general dejection.

When I left the cottage I started with a brisk step across the bridge. I wanted to shake off the melancholy effect of the visit I had just made. Below me the river slipped softly over its bed; the river which had—in common perhaps with old Matthew—kept its last guilty secret so long. I was on the field-path and about to cross the smaller bridge when I heard some one running to overtake me. It was Mary, and I stood still to wait for her.

"Oh, sir," she said, breathlessly, as soon as she reached me, "can nothing be done to get grandfather away from this dreadful place? It works on his mind so. I cannot bear to stay here."

"Where would you go to?" I asked. "Is there a cottage that would do for you anywhere near?"

"I should like to go to Canada, sir, we have friends there;—if grandfather could but be persuaded."

"But John Edge?" I answered in surprise, "what would he say to such a plan?"

"I've told John Edge that I'll have nothing more to do with him," she answered, "and I shall tell him so again; but I'd rather go where I needn't tell him so any more."

"What has he done to vex you?"

"Nothing at all, sir; don't think that. But I'd rather never see his face again than think that he'll cross that bridge—if it were only once more, to look for me."

"You go too far, Mary," I said, "and will get as mad on the subject as your grandfather himself, if you are not careful. John Edge is not an idiot, nor a drunkard—as he said to me—not even a giddy girl like the poor lass who was drowned here, that he should slip into the water without rhyme or reason."

"But the young man they found last, sir, he

was neither an idiot nor a drunkard; yet he didn't escape. Oh, sir, if you knew what it is to live in that cottage, with the river day and night at your door, and to keep waiting and dreading, thinking always that there must be another, and not knowing if it will be one of your own next time, or one who came to his death from love of you, you wouldn't wonder at me; you would pity me and try to help me."

"I do pity you; but I don't know how to help. I have no influence with your grandfather; he would listen to some of your neighbours more than to me."

"You don't know the neighbours, sir, they are very good and kind in sickness, or any trouble like that. But I cannot speak to them of this; they talk too much already; and if I showed how much I cared about it, and how much I wanted to go, they would think there was some reason behind, more than I could tell of."

"And is there no such reason, Mary?" I asked in an impulse of sympathy and courage; "if you think your grandfather knows more of these accidents than other people, it would be kindest to himself and to every one to say so. Even if he had something to do with them," I went on in a low voice, "if he—caused them himself, it would not be murder, but madness, that he would be accused of; nothing would be done to hurt him, he would only be kept out of the way of doing harm to other people."

Mary had drawn back, with a white and scared face.

"Murder!" she repeated in a low voice, with a frightened glance over her shoulder.

"I don't know what you mean, sir. There isn't any talk of murder that I know of. My grandfather's an old man, and getting foolish, maybe; but he's always been good and gentle in his ways—ask the neighbours if he hasn't—and it wouldn't be like you—not what I have thought of you—to say a word that would harm a poor man like him."

"I don't want to hurt him, Mary, but only to help you, to encourage you, if you have any secret which is wearing your life out, to tell it to me, and let me see what can be done to put an end to all this trouble."

"I've no secret, sir, that I can tell you; I'm sure I've not said a word, not a single word," she added, vehemently, "which could mean that I have anything to tell you against my grandfather."

"But if you know anything, Mary, speak now. It will be best in the end for him and all of us."

"I know *nothing, nothing*," she replied, with still more vehemence, "no more than you do, or anybody else does, of how those poor creatures came to their death. If I said a word to mean that I knew grandfather had anything to do with it, that would be a wicked lie. I have been living with my own dreadful thoughts, sir, and that must have made me talk crazily, or you never would have put such a word in my mouth."

"I didn't say you said it, Mary; I only fancied you thought it. I, like you, have my thoughts, and like you, too, I suppose, no knowledge. But knowledge must come sooner or later, and if we could have reached it together, it would have been better for all of us."

"I can never help any one to say an ill word of

my grandfather," answered Mary, with quiet determination, "and I am sorry I spoke to you at all. Good night, sir."

She waited for no reply, but walked back to the cottage, with a brisk, firm step, like one who has taken her burthen on her shoulders again, and is determined to bear it with courage.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARY AND HER LOVER.

The frost ended with a heavy fall of snow, which dropped for many hours softly through the clouded air, keeping a murky curtain between the hills and the valleys. When the curtain rose, the transformation scene was complete; the world was white and brilliant, the mountains shining with dazzling brightness against a blue sky, and the trees laden with weight of crisp snow. The streams looked black in contrast to the prevailing whiteness; even the clear still lake lay dark and sombre between its gleaming shores.

The snow appeared to raise the spirits of the dalesmen in the usual manner—an effect which cannot be quite explained by its mere beauty of appearance. It was bad for many animals, made walking difficult and uncomfortable, and added to the labour of the horses on the roads. It was expensive; it was uncomfortable; it gave many persons bad colds; nevertheless, the same cheery looks and joyful greeting met one in every direction. "Seasonable weather, sir; healthy weather this."

Old Matthew looked down at the creeping river and up at the snow-laden mountains.

"It's all up there, sir, yet," he remarked, "but it's got to come down; nearly every bit of it has to come this way through this beck, and it'll come before long now."

He seemed to be impatient for the rising of the next flood.

The thaw came at last; the pent up streams burst their icy bonds, and thundered down the rifts in the mountain sides. Running water covered the slopes of the hills like a veil, time and room being both wanted for the following of more circuitous courses. The right and left arms of the Scar Gill Fall joined their forces and leapt foaming in one great torrent into the seething gulf below. The clear stream of the Raven ran muddy and dark, bearing along branches and torn up fragments of moss and shrub. The trees beside it had dropped the weight of snow into the river, and stood drowning on its banks, lifting dark and dripping arms above the surging waters.

Many of the townspeople went to the bridge, to look at the rising flood, in the morning; but in the afternoon, when I walked that way again, the place was comparatively deserted. Only Mary Gibson stood there, with John Edge, both leaning against the wall of the bridge, absorbed in their own talk, and indifferent to the aspect of the river.

Mary turned as if to fly when she saw me, but John caught her by the arm and spoke.

"Nay, Mary, you shan't run away. You've said your say, and I'll say mine. You shall judge between us, sir; you've been a friend to us both. Mary tells me, without giving any reason for it,

that she'll have nothing more to do with me, and that I'm to give up coming to see her."

"I told you," said Mary, her breath coming quickly as she spoke, "that my duty was to grandfather and the little one. They're not fit to be left, and I'll stay here as long as they do."

"And I tell you that, if you'll have me, I'll marry you and come to live here too; I've spoken to your grandfather, and he has no objection."

"You never shall!" she answered passionately; "to add one more to my troubles and cares. You'd cross this bridge four times every day then."

"Why shouldn't I cross it?" he asked; "come, Mary, give up and agree that it's nonsense, and that you didn't mean what you say."

"Nonsense or no nonsense, I mean it, and I will stick to it. I'll never marry you as long as grandfather is alive; Dolly I would bring to you, but grandfather, never—never!"

"I know he's queer-tempered at times, Mary, but what's that in an old man? We young ones can put up with it easy enough."

"It isn't only his temper," she began, then she seemed to remember something, stopped and looked at me.

"If he's queer in other ways and wants looking after a bit, there's all the more reason I should help you to do it," John went on; "old folk are often so, they get a bit childish before they die, and won't listen to reason. Don't you think I can put up with that too?"

"It won't do; it won't do," she repeated. "Oh, John, don't press me so; it's hard enough without that," and she turned away with the sound of coming tears in her voice.

"I don't want to add to your troubles, Mary, whatever they are; but you aren't reasonable. It isn't as though you said I had vexed you any way, that might make a difference; but I know you were fond of me a little while ago, and I can't see why you should change so."

"But I have changed. I don't want to marry. If you hunt me out and follow me like this when I say I don't want you, I'll run away and hide myself where you can never find me until I die."

"Mary!"

"You say I was fond of you. Listen to this then; I wish I had never known you or seen your face all my life. I wish now that I could be sure, quite sure, never to see your face again; never once, anywhere, anyhow—if I could be sure of that, how I should thank God for it!"

He dropped the hand which he had held, detaining her, and turned to me with a pale face.

"Is there anything I can say, sir, after that?" he asked, like a man wounded in an unexpected place, perplexed by the blow of a friend, and uncertain of his own perceptions.

"You must let her go, and do as she wants for a time," I answered, while Mary stood a little aloof, withdrawn from the group, but with alert eyes, listening anxiously. "Don't add to her troubles just now. Don't go to see her; at any rate don't come across the bridge to do it."

"But I will do it," he answered violently, with a reaction from his patience and his tenderness into obstinacy and indignation. "I won't be fooled and thrown over like this. I'll come, and come, until she gives me a better reason for staying away. Do you believe, sir, and does she

believe, that a man can go on thinking of the same woman year after year, fancying she belongs to him and is going to pass her life with him, and then drop her out of his thoughts all at once, as easily as he kicks a pebble off his road into the river there? I'm not the man to do it; and I'll come and come, until she's sick of the sight of me, and will be glad to tell me why she wants me to keep away."

He gave an angry glance at her as he spoke, and ended with a fierce abruptness.

Mary looked at him, then at me, in a frightened, troubled manner; then she burst into sudden and passionate weeping, and fled from us into the cottage, shutting and locking the door behind her.

We both stood silent for a moment, and in that interval of human passion the noise of the rushing river seemed to rise and fill the valley with its tumult.

"I think I'll go home now, sir," John Edge said, breaking the silence and speaking with a bitter brevity of tone; "I've heard enough hard words for one day. All the same," he added doggedly, "she hasn't done with me. I shall come back here for more." And he strode away across the fields, with the step of a man resolved to persist in the course he has put before himself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST VICTIM.

SEVERAL days passed away. It seemed as if the latest flood would subside without securing a new sacrifice to its greed for human life. Meanwhile the waters of the river rose and fell, and rose again as the weather changed and the rain-clouds gathered, or the frost returned. Sometimes the field-path was passable and sometimes it was not. On the fourth day, when the waters of the Raven filled the river bed without overflowing it, I went across the meadows to see Mary.

I was surprised to find Dolly in the house alone, tossing from side to side in her little bed with decidedly feverish symptoms. She said she had been "pooley" since yesterday, and that Mary had gone to the village to get medicine for her. Mary hadn't wanted to go, she said; Mary had waited, and waited, for grand-dad to come back and go instead; till she couldn't wait any longer, and had run off very fast to try and get back before dark. She, Dolly, thought grand-dad had gone to take home some of Mary's sewing to the Colonel's. Mary wanted him to go; she said she wouldn't leave Dolly; she hadn't been down to the town for a long, long time. She never would go now, most specially when the river was big; she always made grand-dad go, and often he was very cross and said he wouldn't, but it wasn't any use talking to Mary and making her cry; she was a naughty girl and would stay at home, and grand-dad had to go and buy things when he wanted to stop and watch the river; and he had to take Mary's sewing, else they couldn't get the money for it; but he was a long time coming back to-day, and Mary said she couldn't think what he was doing, and so at last she went herself.

So Dolly informed me, with the pleasure which a child has in explaining the backsliding of its elders to a sympathetic hearer. Her grandfather scolded Mary in her hearing which gave Dolly herself a right to speak with disapprobation of her elder sister; and Mary wouldn't do what her grandfather told her, which again gave Dolly a right to refer slightly to her grandfather's commands. Dissension in the government is speedily detected by the governed, and it was evident that Dolly, perceiving that neither of her elders held undisputed sway, intended to emancipate herself from their control at the earliest possible date.

I was sorry to discover that Mary's troubles and anxieties were likely to be increased by the child's illness. I regretted that I had not been in time to offer to do her errand for her, and determined at least to wait with the little patient until her sister's return.

When Dolly's discourse was done, I went to the door to see if Mary could be perceived, coming either along the field-path or on the high-road.

Mary was nowhere in sight; but John Edge was striding across the bridge towards the cottage. I went to meet him and told him the state of affairs there.

"I would go to meet her, if I knew which way she would come," he answered; "the field-path is very wet, yet she might want to take the shortest cut. I had best stay here and watch for her."

Under these circumstances I thought it unnecessary to wait also, and so, promising to reassure Mary if I should meet her, I started for the town again.

The light was fading in the valley and the clouds gathering. A little mist crept along the ground and began to encircle the rocks and mounds and to dim the outlines of field and hedge. When I looked back I saw that John Edge had seated himself on the wall of the bridge to watch for Mary's return. It was a commanding position, which enabled him to look down the road and across the field-path at the same time; but it struck me as a foolhardy one under existing circumstances. He swung his feet over the river where it was rushing with its greatest swiftness and depth. A careless start, or a sudden loss of balance, would send him straight down into its waters. Carelessness and unsteadiness were foreign to his nature; and at any other place, or at any other time of my life, I should have laughed at the idea of danger to such a man in such a position. Boys sit on bridges and fishermen sit on quays in rows in just such a manner without accident happening. But the suspicion that the victims at Meadow Bridge had not met with fair play, that it was not pure accident which led them to death when they ought to have been perfectly safe, made me feel a sudden thrill of anxiety as I looked at John Edge.

Should I go back and warn him? He was safe if left alone, and the landscape looked desolate, the valley empty. It was true that someone might approach him unseen from the other end of the valley—the one to which his back was turned—by creeping along the low wall between river and road, and up between the walls of Meadow Bridge. The upward curve of its arch, and the angle at which it stood to the path would have prevented me from seeing—as I now looked at it—that it

was perfectly clear of any passengers, even if the blurring mist had not—creeping round the corner of it and wavering stealthily upwards over its slope—made all things in the shadow of it uncertain and indistinct. I still hesitated, glancing up the valley and down it, to be sure that Matthew, with his dangerous warnings and suspicious forebodings, was nowhere approaching. Up the valley was solitude, but down it I caught sight of Mary coming along the road. At the same moment she caught sight of the figure seated on the bridge and, struck by a greater terror than mine, broke into a rapid run in order to reach it quickly. My eyes were fixed on her so that I did not see the beginning of what followed; but—almost as soon as I had realized that she was running—I saw her stop again, open her arms with a gesture of terror, so that the parcels she held fell to the ground, and run wildly to the river bank.

At the first startled movement I looked back to the bridge, and saw John Edge flying through the air towards the water, as if he had leaped of his own intention straight into the river. No one else was visible, and I had no time to think of any one else. I tore my coat off and made for the bank lower down, where the curve of the river brought it towards me, giving me the gain of a moment in reaching it. I knew that John was a good swimmer; but the possibility of foul play lessened all his chances; only a madman would have sprung into that foaming torrent; and if he had not sprung, if he had been pushed, the catastrophe must have been too sudden for him to meet it with full command of his faculties. I reached the river in time to see his body rise in a great swell of water and drive onwards down stream. He was making no apparent effort to help himself, but was being carried on unresistingly by the strong current. I sprang in just below, caught hold of an overhanging branch and held myself back against the fierce push and drag of the current, so that I was able to catch at him, and seize him by the arm as he was driven past. The force of the stream was too great for me then; the tree seemed to be torn from my grasp, and we both went on down the stream together. Resistance to the current was at this place impossible, the utmost I could do was to hold on to John Edge, who seemed quite helpless and unconscious, and to try to prevent our being dashed against the arches of the great bridge below, where the high road crossed the river. This I succeeded in doing, and once beyond the bridge, we were borne into greater waters. Here there was only a still steady rush towards the lake, and even the force of this rush was broken by the curves of the river between its grassy banks, still hidden by the overflow into the adjoining meadows. I managed therefore to direct our course nearer and nearer to the side, and at last found myself in the shallow water of the flooded field, where a few strokes brought me into a perfectly still pool, only a foot or two in depth, so that I could wade easily to the shore.

By the time I was properly out of the water, dragging John Edge after me, several persons from the high road, attracted by the cries of Mary, had reached the spot. We unbuttoned John's coat, and felt his pulse, and his heart; both were beating faintly, but he showed no sign of consciousness; and a large bruise on the forehead accounted for all the passiveness he had shown in

the river. Evidently in his violent and unexpected descent from the bridge, he had plunged deep into the water, and struck his head against one of the jutting rocks, which abounded there; he had made no struggle after. While we chafed his hands and tried to restore him, at least to warmth and more distinct vitality, Mary reached us, and flung herself on the grass beside him. When she saw that his eyes were closed, and that he gave no sign of life, she rose again and looked round her like a hunted and desperate creature.

"Take me," she said, "take me to some one to whom I can tell the truth. This is a judgment on me for not having told it before. My grandfather has killed him as he killed the others."

CHAPTER X.

GUILTY OR INNOCENT?

JOHN EDGE lay unconscious, and the doctor could not say whether he would ever again awake to life and thought.

The whole valley was full of excitement, some blaming Mary, some pitying her; many saying that she ought to have spoken before; others holding that only a delusion of the brain made her speak now.—"It's turned her wits, poor girl, at last; folk shouldn't heed what she says at such a time."

Opinions with regard to Matthew himself were equally divided, some believing him to be guiltless and others regarding him with horror as a monster of cruelty.

"If she knew of it before and didn't speak, she's as bad as he is," declared many indignantly. "She's quite mad now and doesn't know what she's saying," others declared: "It's the shock she got, seeing John killed before her eyes."

Whatever the people's opinion might be, the charge was too serious and had been made with too much decision to be ignored by the authorities; so Matthew Gibson was arrested and charged with the attempted murder of John Edge. He was found sitting quietly in his cottage, where Dolly said he had just arrived, and his statement of how the preceding hour had been passed tallied completely with the evidence of the servants at the house he had come from. It was possible indeed that he had walked more rapidly than he professed to have done, and that he reached the bridge before the accident instead of after it; but his own account of the time of his arrival was corroborated by the evidence of a neighbour who had passed along the high-road above the bridge shortly before the accident and must have met Matthew going there if he had been earlier than he pretended—unless indeed the old man had purposely concealed himself from this witness, for which he could have had no motive, as the attack on John Edge—if it took place at all—could not have been premeditated.

On the other hand, the vague suspicions which had floated in the minds of men concerning the tragedies at Meadow Bridge now could take shape and find tangible footing on which to rest. The position of the bridge had long been seen to have in itself no element of danger to the passer-by; but, given homicidal human will—and that will hidden in an unsuspected old man whose natural

habits kept him ever on the spot, ready to seize the opportunities that came to him—and the position of the bridge lent itself easily to tragic possibilities. The repeated risings of the river, the frequent use of the bridge by solitary passengers, the comparative loneliness of the spot, the want of light in the road near it—all made it a suitable place for the exercise of foul play, and the foul play must be the more dangerous because it could work so long without being suspected. Granted a human agency in the matter, and it was only wonderful that the accidents had not been still more frequent at the place.

The consideration of these possibilities produced a new feeling in the minds of the dalesmen, and was the origin of a new terror. Supposing that old Matthew had actually caused all the recent deaths at Meadow Bridge, and yet that his guilt could not be brought home to him, then indeed a dark shade of crime in the past and a definite fear for the future would rest upon the valley. Or supposing even that an ultimate conviction were secured but that he should yet for a time be permitted to go at large, what an interval of dread there would be for those mothers who were compelled to let their children go out alone or to send them on errands near the place! It was said that a nephew of Matthew's—a well-to-do farmer—on hearing of the old man's trouble, had ridden over from Lonedale to offer bail to the amount of £500. Those who thought well of standing authorities—and these formed a great majority in Scardale—were however confident that the magistrates would have too much regard for the public safety to accept such an offer.

Rumour stated even that Colonel Race, of High Crag, magistrate, had stopped Doctor Tyson on the road to ask him if it would be safe to let old Matthew out on bail until John Edge should be sufficiently recovered to give evidence against him; and that Doctor Tyson had declared that old Matthew was either perfectly innocent or a dangerous lunatic who ought not to be at liberty for half an hour. Whether this rumour had any foundation or not, it certainly proved re-assuring to many minds.

The chief danger, then, lay in the difficulty in proving the old man's guilt. He had been brought before the magistrates the morning after his arrest, and remanded at the request of the police, on the ground that two principal witnesses, John Edge himself and little Dolly Gibson, were at present unable to appear. Hoping to spare Mary as much as possible, I had come forward and related my own experience at the bridge, when old Matthew had startled me in the dark; and this was considered sufficient, under the peculiar circumstances, to justify a remand, without going further into the present case. Mary's evidence was, for some reason, kept in reserve by the police; either because they found it very unsubstantial and hoped to get other evidence to corroborate it before bringing it forward, or because they suspected her of not yet being willing to tell all she knew. If John Edge recovered consciousness all difficulty in getting at the facts would be over at once; in the meantime the case was adjourned.

This interval offered the dalespeople opportunity for much discourse. Numbers of Matthew's neighbours were now ready to declare that they had always suspected him; but none of them seemed

to have actually seen anything to justify their suspicions. What Mary knew of the matter could only be surmised from her first strong statement, for she would tell nothing to those about her.

She sat at home nursing her little sister, who was happily recovering from what had proved to be an attack of influenza, and the only anxiety she showed was to be permitted to come forward and give her evidence in public, a burthen of reparation which she seemed to think was laid upon her; in private she would say nothing. She refused sympathy and went about her daily task in a stony despair, like one disgraced and undone for ever. She had destroyed her lover and betrayed her grandfather; she was branded as a murderer's granddaughter and as one whose silence had made her a participator in his guilt. Now she had—when too late to secure her happiness—to come forward and be the instrument of the old man's punishment.

John Edge was being nursed at home, in the cottage where he lived with a married sister, and the only comfort which Mary found, in these weary days, was the little talk which she had each morning with the doctor, who came from his bedside to Dolly's.

This doctor—a young man not long settled in the place—used to come sometimes and have a smoke and chat with me. He sympathized with Mary, but thought she looked too darkly at the situation.

"I can't make her understand," he said, "that if the old man has done it, he is guilty of madness, not murder. It is punishment she persists in thinking of for him, and disgrace for herself."

"There was no motive whatever on his part for the crimes. He selected his victims as they offered themselves, not out of malice or hatred. He had been kind to the very people he is supposed to have killed. It must be a sheer case of homicidal mania—and a most desperate one—if he is guilty at all. If people were not so ignorant in these matters, the thing need never have gone so far. If Mary had understood that it was her grandfather's misfortune, not his fault, and that he ought to be taken care of, not punished, she would have spoken out her suspicion long ago and the old man might have been watched. If she had spoken to me, now, I would have gone into the case. But she seems to have imagined it was an affair for the police, or nobody. She thought that murder was a new vice developing in the old man, and that if she could get him away to other associations he might get rid of it—leave it behind like a broken-off habit, in fact. She has been torn to pieces between her duty and affection to her grandfather and her duty to her neighbours. No wonder she was determined to quarrel with John Edge; she thought it treachery to her grandfather to tell him her suspicions, and she was afraid lest frequent and unwary visits should lead to the very thing that has happened. If she had spoken out he would have helped her, too; we would all have helped her. She tells me that she was not afraid of your coming to the bridge, because you seemed to be already on your guard, and suspicious of the old man; and also that the old man used to come in and sit down by the fire in a settled manner when you were sketching, instead of wandering about in the strange aimless way that frightened her—up and down the banks,

under and over the bridge, appearing and disappearing like a ghost. She has a very firm conviction of his guilt, but I doubt if she has any real case to go before a jury."

He did not tell me all this at once, but at different times, convinced of my sympathy with Mary, in whom, like all those with whom she came into close contact, the young surgeon was much interested.

He had not attended the family at Meadow Bridge Cottage very long, having succeeded an older man, who had now retired from regular practice.

This man—the Doctor Tyson of whom rumour had spoken before with regard to the case—had attended Matthew in a serious illness years before, and would, so I now understand, come forward with evidence tending to prove Matthew's probable insanity. The illness had been the result of an accident, and this accident was the beginning of those troubles to which Mrs. Jimson referred when she spoke to me of Matthew Gibson the first time.

In earlier days Matthew had been a gamekeeper to Colonel Race. His youngest son and favourite child, familiarly known in the valley as young Mat, had acted under him as gamekeeper's assistant.

The two were out together one day when young Mat, in attempting to knock down a rabbit which crossed his path, accidentally struck his father on the head. A long and dangerous illness resulted, from which Matthew slowly recovered, showing a strange sullenness, and being subject to violent fits of temper for a time. These symptoms passed gradually away, however; and he was regarded as completely recovered, but not so strong and fit for active work as he had been; so that Colonel Race appointed another gamekeeper in his place, and gave Matthew odd bits of easy work to do for regular wages, which gradually settled into a small sinecure pension.

Matthew was perfectly content with this arrangement.

Matthew's wife, meanwhile, had fretted a great deal over his illness, and reproached the boy who was the cause of it. Young Mat, to escape the troubles of home, went off and enlisted, to die of cholera abroad before his father was well enough to understand what had happened.

Matthew felt no anger against his son, but he never forgave his wife for driving the boy away. It was said that the old woman had been worried and fretted into her grave.

After her death Matthew gradually recovered his old cheerfulness, became much attached to his grandchildren—daughters of an elder son than Mat—and lived a harmless, kindly, though somewhat feeble sort of life. His evident fondness for Dolly made all the mothers in the valley love and trust him; and he had been kind to Mary until recently, when she had opposed some of his wishes and shown a disagreeable inclination to "spy on him."

On the whole, Matthew Gibson's reputation had been that of an eccentric but exceedingly good and gentle old man.

(To be concluded next week.)

AN AWKWARD SITUATION.

BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.

I HAD been shooting all day with very indifferent success, for the wind had been high, the snipe wild, and my nerves altogether out of order. Grip, too, a handsome young pointer, had been unusually tiresome. Not satisfied with deliberately seizing one bird in his mouth—a performance that he will be unlikely to repeat in a hurry—he had flushed several others long before I could get within range. In fact, we had both behaved like duffers, though at the time I naturally laid all the blame upon him. After tramping through many miles of bog and heather, mountain and moor, I was bringing back an empty bag, or nearly so. It would be hard to say whether I or Grip, skulking along at my heels, looked the more crestfallen. What with bodily fatigue and mental depression, I was thoroughly exhausted on my arrival at Cronkghlass.

Mary, the housemaid, met me in the hall. The family, she said, had gone to supper at Mr. Ritchie's. Would I follow, or would I prefer to stay quietly indoors?

I had no hesitation in choosing the latter alternative. Mr. Ritchie was a stranger to me, his house was at a considerable distance, and I was in no condition for another walk—ample reasons for deciding to remain where I was.

Cronkghlass was a fine old country-house, about two miles from the nearest town and half a mile from the sea. There was a high mountain range in the background, and the country around was wild, rugged, and thinly populated, merely an occasional labourer's cottage. It belonged to my friend Ralph Corcoran, who lived there with his wife and two children, Philip and Jennie, aged twenty-two and nineteen respectively. Though not wealthy according to the general acceptation of the term, they had no lack of worldly comforts, and a more simple, cheerful, affectionate family it would be difficult to meet.

Ralph and I had been at the same school, the same college at Cambridge, and since then it had come to be an understood thing that I was to spend several weeks every year at Cronkghlass. On the present occasion my visit was rather out of due season, the month of October being an uninteresting time in that neighbourhood; but, as I had been completely knocked up by overwork, a rest had become absolutely necessary, and my old friend Ralph's invitation had followed as a matter of course.

Being very fond of shooting, I had plenty of congenial occupation, and a week had glided by rapidly. Perhaps severe bodily exercise was not the best remedy for a weary brain; but I candidly admit that I have never had a liking for the middle path which some consider the safest. Ralph had repeatedly urged a little moderation, but my invariable reply had been that I must shoot while I had the chance. This morning some business in connection with the property had prevented him from accompanying me as usual, and Philip also having had an engagement, I had been obliged to go alone. Before starting I had been reminded of the invitation to Mr. Ritchie's,

but had said that as I might not return until late, they were not on any account to wait for me, and that I might not care to go at all. Thus it was that I had the house all to myself in the evening.

I must say that for the moment I was glad to be alone. Tired, worried, and out of spirits as I was, any obligation to talk and keep up appearances would have been well-nigh intolerable. I took off my heavy shooting-boots in the hall, and gave them to Mary to carry into the kitchen; telling her at the same time that I should like something to eat as soon as possible. My slippers were in the study, or perhaps armoury would be a better name for Ralph's sanctum; a neat little washstand stood in one corner of the room, and as there had been no rain, my clothes were quite dry; so there was no need to go upstairs. This at any rate was some comfort.

One of the first things that I did was to extract the cartridges, and return them all to the stores in the study. My breechloader I placed in the hall, with the intention of taking it upstairs so as to clean it before breakfast. Then after soap and water had made me sufficiently presentable for my own society, I crawled into the quaint oak-panelled dining-room. A cheerful log-fire was blazing in the tiled grate, and I wearily dropped into the armchair in front of it.

Grip, the rascal, was already curled up on the hearthrug. But at my approach he raised his head with a pitiful inquiring look, as if he dreaded a further reprimand for his atrocious conduct. Being still angry, I took no notice of him, but gazed moodily into the fire, while with his head between his forepaws he lay watching for some sign of forgiveness. We were not a very sociable couple that evening, but I shared my supper with him nevertheless.

About ten o'clock the housemaid came in to clear away. Although I have not yet reached the age that will complacently confess to a snooze during the daytime, there can be but little doubt that the fire had proved rather powerful. Any way it took me a few moments to grasp the situation.

"The servants are going to bed now, sir," she said just before leaving the room. "Can I do anything for you first?"

"I think not, Mary; except bring me my candlestick."

"Then you won't sit up for Mr. Corcoran?"

"No, I can scarcely keep my eyes open as it is." This was a perfectly true statement. If it led the unsuspecting Mary to a false conclusion that was her look-out. "When do you expect them back?"

"The mistress said about half-past twelve, but I was not to wait for them."

"Then good-night, Mary," I said, thinking that not many families showed such consideration for their dependents.

"Good-night, sir."

She lighted my candle, placed it on the table, and then withdrew. As the servants slept in the left wing, connected with the kitchen by means of a passage, but shut off from the rest of the building, I was now practically alone in this ghost-ridden old house, for such it was reputed to be. Not that I have ever been superstitious or was yet conscious of any sense of isolation; I was too

depressed and drowsy to think of anything but bed.

When I turned down the lamp, Grip rose to accompany me. He was promptly told to lie down and wait for his master; which he did under protest. But as a precaution against thieves—the idea would have sent Ralph into a roar of laughter, but I was a Londoner—I left the door ajar, so that the dog might have access to other parts of the house. Then I shouldered my gun, and, with the candle in the other hand, trudged upstairs to my bedroom.

It was not until I had gained the first landing of the broad old-fashioned staircase that I began to feel a vague uneasiness, which commenced with a shiver as if I had caught a chill. Of course, it was extremely absurd, but then we are most of us liable to these fits of irrational weakness, and never more so than when fatigued in mind and body. Yet my drowsiness had vanished like a fleeting shadow. If I had been sleeping all the afternoon and evening I could not have been more wakeful; all my faculties were not only on the alert, but also strangely sharpened. Leaning against the balustrade, I lowered the candle as far as my arm would reach and peered down into the hall, without having the faintest notion of what I was looking for. Not a moving thing was to be seen. I stood up and listened, with my head bent on one side, and my eyes upon the oil-paintings hanging on the wall of the staircase. The silence was intense—painfully intense. I stilled my own breathing, it jarred so disagreeably upon the leaden atmosphere that filled the house. For the same reason, as well as for fear of incurring my own ridicule—and this is what a man shrinks from more than anything else—I refrained from calling to Grip, glad as I would have been to forgive him for the sake of his company. The old portraits seemed to wear a mocking expression; not a face, whether of courtly warrior or ruffled dame, but met mine with a directness that I never noticed at any other time. I certainly was "playing to the gallery," but a more stolidly cynical audience would be impossible.

The fact of the matter was, my whole system had been surely overtaxed and needed rest. While rating myself for my folly, I was rapidly working myself up into a state of nervous excitement which would put sleep out of the question. Never before had I been so distressed at the creaking of the stairs, every one had its own note, and every note was a discord making every nerve in my body quiver. I felt inexpressibly relieved when the last flight was surmounted.

My bedroom was on the second and highest floor. Ralph had often asked me to take the chamber of honour down below, but I preferred the old room—the one I used to sleep in when visiting there in my schoolboy days. Several doors were grouped close together on the landing at the head of the staircase, and in the centre stood an ancient Dutch clock, asthmatical but fairly reliable. I looked at the time. It was exactly a quarter-past ten, so that my friends were unlikely to return for more than two hours.

It is singular what trifles strike one when the mind is disturbed. In front of the clock the carpet had come unstitched and was slightly raised as if a foot had caught in it—a supposition rendered the more probable by the fact that at

one corner of the arch there were a few specks of dust. As a general rule, I am as blind as my fellows to domestic details of this sort, yet it arrested my attention in a moment. After listening intently for any sound downstairs, I advanced to the spot, held out the candle, and gazed steadily at these wonderful dust-specks. Indeed, but for the absurdity of the thing, I would have gone down upon my knees to examine them. Even the best regulated families are not proof against accidents, was my conclusion as I turned towards my door. It was wide open. This also struck me as an unusual circumstance, though it had probably often happened before.

It will be necessary to describe my bedroom rather minutely. It was a good-sized oblong room, with a carpet in the centre of the floor and a broad border of dark oak. A large iron bedstead stood against one wall, between a cupboard in another and the door, there being about a yard to spare at the one end and two yards at the other. It had a thick valance which closed up the space underneath like a box, but no other fittings, and the top rail was exactly the same as the bottom, with the exception of a little difference in the height. When the door was open I could scarcely pass between it and the foot of the bed, and when that was accomplished, a heavy press made another narrow channel to be slipped through. The fireplace was near the head of the bed, on the left; a few books were piled on the mantelshelf within reach, and a wicker-work armchair faced a table covered with miscellaneous articles, chiefly connected with gunnery. The one window was opposite to the bed. There were no pictures on the walls, only a few shelves, a couple of stick-racks, a map of the estate, and a bracket or two. Altogether it was a room of untidy utility.

I had scarcely entered when I was seized with an unaccountable feeling that I was not alone, though not a person was visible, and, so far as appearances were concerned, not a thing had been touched. I laid the candlestick and gun upon the table at my elbow and, turning the armchair round, sat down and stared at the bed. Somehow or other, I distrusted it. My eyes were attracted towards it by a horrible fascination. Strangely enough, though it could be seen from the landing, I had not experienced this distrust before closing the door, but the moment that I was, so to speak, isolated from the house, I felt the same chill shivering as before. The whole thing was vastly absurd, I tried to persuade myself, and yet had not others said that they had *felt* the presence of an intruder? A creature of flesh and blood was scarcely possible, notwithstanding the disarrangement of the carpet outside, and then again a modern bedstead would be an odd haunt for an old-fashioned ghost. It was too ridiculous. Determined to conquer myself, I walked to the window, drew up the blind and looked out.

It was a wild-looking night, though the wind was all overhead. Scarcely a twig was stirring, and yet the black clouds were scurrying through the sky in all manner of grotesque shapes, fleeing in terror from some mysterious power. It had a peculiarly weird effect, the stillness below and the confusion above, with the full moon as a silent spectator of the scene. Cronkghlass was perched

on the top of a hill, up which the avenue wriggled like a snake. I could distinguish the town beyond the trees in the distance, and, sweeping round in an irregular curve, the sea glistening in the moonlight.

But my survey of the landscape was little more than momentary. I had the strongest aversion to turn my back upon the bed; I felt that I must face it. My careful scrutiny had failed to detect anything unusual in it; I candidly admit that I was a prey to foolish timidity, due solely to exhaustion and not to any supernatural warning or nonsense of that sort. None the less, however, I watched that bed as a cat watches a mouse-hole; stealthily advanced towards it with the intention of lifting the valance and looking underneath, but drew back sharply,—why, I cannot say; sat down in the armchair and watched again; and once more approached to raise the valance. But no, I would not be so unutterably foolish. Having always been in the habit of checking myself when I caught myself on the point of yielding to some irrational prejudice, I exerted my will now and began to undress. While I did so, I still kept my eye on the bed and every now and again stopped to listen. Indeed, I sometimes paused in a very cunning manner, when an article was only half off yet so arranged that I could peep down the sleeve; and while pacing to and fro, keeping the bed well in view, I came to sudden halts at unequal intervals; but the result was invariably the same—absolute stillness and silence, and the undefinable dread reigning over all. By this time I had learnt how easy it would be to qualify for a lunatic asylum.

Let me say at once that had I raised the valance, I should not be writing this narrative; so that my dread of doing so must be regarded as a curious coincidence, but certainly nothing more.

The blind was still drawn up and I determined to leave it so, and as the moon was in the front of the house, its light, though fitful, came straight in at the window. When undressed, I laid the gun—unloaded, remember—across the armchair, within reach of the bed. This again was an unusual act, for which I can give no other reason than what has been given already.

Finally, I glanced round the room to note the general arrangement; took a steady look at the valance; blew out the candle and in the same moment, through sheer force of habit, closed my eyes: and so walked to the bed very slowly and deliberately. Though the space covered did not exceed three yards at the very outside, this walk was the most violent exercise of the will that I ever indulged in; the inclination to leap nimbly into bed lest some invisible phantom should clutch me by the ankles being almost irresistible. That fearful valance was to me what the spider's web is to the fly, and yet with dogged obstinacy I stood by the side of it several seconds longer than was absolutely necessary, while—my eyes still closed—I pulled down the sheets. This done, I got slowly into bed and lay on my back so as to have the use of both ears. For the time, I was merely a listening machine; all my brain-power being concentrated on the one faculty, which however could not detect the slightest break in the leaden silence. The voice of the sea would have

been some relief, for this fickle wayward child of Nature gives one an undeniable feeling of companionship, but the window arrested every murmur.

The quietude was so sepulchral that my mind could not be kept in a healthy groove. I fell to thinking of such of Ralph's ancestors as had died in the room and were said to haunt it, though I had never encountered any of them. Once they had lain there in solemn silence as I was now, waiting for—Whirr-r-r-r! A ghastly noise. I positively sprang into the air and then fell back, angrily denouncing my timidity and regretting the invention of nerves. It was merely the old Dutch clock in one of its wheezing fits; laughable enough now, but very startling at the time. Five minutes afterwards it struck eleven: it sent the notes pealing through the deserted house, but without awakening any response.

A whole hour of unbroken silence lay before me, unless—. I did not care to pursue the reflection further. As I had anticipated, sleep had become impossible. There was nothing to be done but wait, lying on my back, breathing gently and listening. For what? In answer there came a loud crack-crack from somewhere in the room. A moment's reflection told me that it was caused by the wicker-work chair; a frightful contrivance to have in any bedroom, for all the time that you are sitting upon it, you are winding it up, and towards midnight it begins to go off like an intermittent alarm striking at frequent intervals until daybreak.

Severe as the shock was it taught me that my eyes were not hermetically sealed; and by opening them I brought another sense into play. The moonlight made fantastical patterns on the floor, the large dark press near the foot of the bed had an unpleasantly grim aspect, and—yes, surely, the back of the armchair between me and the window was altering its shape. Glued to the bed, I watched it intently, but could see no change in its progress or hear any sound. All was as silent and motionless as it had been since my entrance into the room. Nevertheless, I was not satisfied; the light was too changeable for certainty; and unable to observe the valance, I now transferred my attention to the chair where my gun was laid.

An almost interminable time dragged by. To me it seemed like hours; probably it was not a single half-hour. Nothing having come of my apprehensions, they were beginning to fade away, when of a sudden they returned with tenfold force. I verily believe that in the first moment of the shock my heart stopped, though it sprang forward immediately afterwards and continued to beat with painful rapidity.

There was a man under the bed. I heard him moving distinctly. He was creeping out near the chair.

As soon as I had grasped these facts my energies returned with a rush. One moment I was a poor paralysed creature, the next a resolute man without the least feeling of fatigue. Though a fight against unknown weapons in the dark is not a pleasant sensation, there was at any rate something human to contend against—something to grapple with, be the end what it might.

I sprang to my knees and snatched the gun from the chair. In so doing I saw in a patch of moonlight by the bedside a most villainous-looking

head: desperately white face, knobby nose, thick lips, gleaming eyes, and black hair standing up in such short bristles as to suggest a gaol-bird. In fact, it was a nigger's head with all the colour ran into the stubby hair. My sudden action having taken him quite by surprise, his face was turned up in alarm. He had some distance further to crawl before he could rise to his feet, and he was evidently hesitating whether to advance or retreat. In his right hand, which was upon the floor, he carried a revolver—my revolver taken from the table. It had been lying under some other things and I had forgotten all about it. The tin box of cartridges had also disappeared. Brief as my time for observation was, it was long enough to note these details.

Had I chosen I could certainly have killed him then and there, but to take the life of a fellow-creature even in self-defence—well, I don't think I could manage it. In my nervous haste to disable him and anxiety not to do anything more, I clumsily brought the butt-end of the gun down upon the arm of the chair, and before I could aim another blow he had disappeared under the valance again. By missing this opportunity I gave him a terrible advantage. Neither of us could quit our relative positions, but whereas he was perfectly secure from me, I was liable to be shot at from any one of the three exposed sides of the bed without having a chance of defending myself. This, it will be admitted, was An Awkward Situation.

If the moonlight would only last, my position was by no means desperate, but I dreaded the darkness. Though the sky was clearer than it had been earlier in the evening, the moon was unfortunately stealing round towards the back of the house. However, I should be able to see fairly well for about an hour, clouds permitting. Having learnt from my failure that there was insufficient space for swinging the gun as a club, I intended to use it as a sort of miniature battering-ram.

My first proceeding was to send the armchair flying into the middle of the room, so as to prevent a second accident, and deprive my enemy of any chance of gaining cover. Then I stood in the centre of the bed, and listened, glancing quickly from side to side. Yes, he was moving; he was crawling towards the door. I made a spring in that direction, and grasping the gun firmly in both hands, held it over the rail in readiness to drop upon him. He stopped, shuffled about, and made for the other end. Again I followed, again he turned, and so we kept on, as in a game of chess when only two or three equal pieces remain on each side, and the players go on moving and moving in the hope that one may commit a blunder. Had our awful game of human lives been submitted to an umpire, he might have declared it "drawn," and yet I felt that any moment the least relaxation of vigilance, an incautious step, even an accident, might put an end to my existence.

During this fearfully trying time the man never uttered a word, and this gave his proceedings an uncanny air. Like a venomous reptile, he crawled stealthily in one direction, and when he saw that I was prepared for him there, as stealthily made his way in another. Fortunately, I could hear his boots dragging along the oak floor, and as the bed was too low to allow him to get fairly upon

his hands and knees, his progress was anything but rapid.

Presently he made an alteration in his tactics. How he managed it puzzled me immensely, but it gave me a startling proof of the danger of my position. Hearing him, as I thought, sneaking along towards the top of the bed, I turned to follow, but just in time caught sight of the revolver coming through the bottom rail. Doubtless that long barrel gleaming in the moonlight would have made me shudder, had I not been obliged to act at once. Jumping on one side, I rammed at the hand that held it, but not quickly enough to do any damage.

And now I became aware of a new and deadly peril. Before I could draw the gun out of reach, the man made a frantic snatch at it. Thank Heaven ! he missed it, but only by about an inch. As I rested it on the bed, the perspiration was standing in great beads upon my forehead, and I was trembling all over at the thought of what I had so narrowly escaped, perhaps only to fall into later. If he were to seize the stock, I should have no chance of holding on by the barrel, especially as when it rested upon the rail the long arm of the lever would be against me; and after having deprived me of my only weapon, he could murder me at his leisure.

I looked round desperately for a cord to fasten the gun to my body, but could see nothing of the sort. Indeed, he was in such incessant motion under the bed, that I had no time to do anything but watch and listen and dart hither and thither. I was thoroughly alarmed to find that my hearing was no longer reliable ; again and again that murderous prowler came creeping out of the most unexpected corners. It struck me at last that he had taken off his boots, and was dragging them in the opposite direction to that in which he himself was going, and this turned out to be the case. When I realized what the cunning brute had done, I confess that I began to despair. The end seemed a mere matter of time ; sooner or later he would catch me napping, and then a bullet would finish the unequal struggle.

Excitement had kept me going so far, but fatigue was beginning to reassert itself. This darting about the yielding surface of a bed was far more wearisome than any amount of ordinary walking, and it is no light burden to carry one's life in one's hand. After my previous mental prostration I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my energies at the proper pitch, the contest seemed so hopeless. Yet could not I also practise some *ruse* and so make matters more equal ? My eyes fell upon the pile of books on the mantelshelf. I seized a couple and flung one at the overturned armchair in the middle of the floor, hoping that my enemy would fire at it haphazard.

Not he. The valance was cautiously raised, as I stood over it with the uplifted gun, and his head slightly protruded. I watched with breathless excitement its outline impressed upon the soft material. Would it come out further, and give me a chance of life ? or would it be withdrawn ? It lingered a moment, and then disappeared, but not before I had grazed it with what would have been a stinging blow. I felt faint with disappointment, and yet had to go on following this crawling creature from side to side, dodging his revolver every other minute, and making wild rushes to prevent his escape.

He still preserved the same uncanny silence ; even the blow, heavy as it must have been, failed to make him open his mouth ; all that he did in consequence was to tear the valance completely off the bed. He was now able to see without any trouble. I hurled the second book against the door, but he took no notice of it. I could no longer deceive him, and doubtless he felt secure of his prey eventually.

After its usual wheezing fit, which so startled us both as to bring about a short cessation of hostilities, the Dutch clock struck twelve. This terrible duel had been going on for barely half an hour, and quite that time must elapse before Ralph's return. In my present state of exhaustion how was I to live until then ? The thing seemed impossible. And then another awful thought burst upon me. Ralph's first proceeding would be to come up to my room ; my shouts to warn him of his danger would only bring him the sooner to learn what was the matter. The moment that he opened the door he would be shot down helplessly. I clenched my teeth on the resolve that before then the contest must be brought to a close one way or the other. I was weak in body and reckless in mind, prepared to fling my life away, but determined to do so in a manner likely to save my friend. It was not courage : it was very nearly despair. For a little while longer I would struggle on, and then—

But my enemy gave me no time to arrange any plans. He had redoubled his exertions since the striking of the clock. It subsequently appeared that he had appropriated the contents of Mrs. Corcoran's jewel-case and ransacked several of the rooms, and being probably aware of the hour at which Ralph would return, he was anxious to make his escape before then. Thus it was tacitly arranged between us that our duel must terminate within half an hour, if possible.

I was standing in the middle of the bed, measuring the distance between it and the door, and thinking that if the two had only been a foot closer together I could have smashed the panel and leaped through on to the landing, when a fresh terror was launched against me. The revolver had not shown itself for a minute or so, and my enemy, who was prudently withholding his fire until he could take aim, had been unusually quiet. This circumstance had only added to my alarm, and I now learned the reason of it. The foot of the bed began to rise slowly and gradually. I was quite dazed at the brute's ingenuity. I felt my flesh creeping at the prospect of being hurled backward, bed and all, and shot as I lay defenceless upon the floor. Gathering myself up for a mighty spring, I came down with all my weight upon the foot of the bed. It shook a little, but scarcely sank at all. He was supporting it upon his back.

While I stood there, stamping heavily upon a slight elevation that was rising in the centre, suddenly there flashed through the counterpane between my feet the cold cruel glitter of steel. I staggered back with a shudder. An inch either way, and it would have passed through one of my feet. It was my own hunting-knife which had been suspended in its leather case from one of the racks, and I knew it to be as sharp as a razor. Before I had recovered from the shock, it had disappeared and the bed was again tilting still more.

Again I leaped upon it, and again the knife sprang through and vanished while I was gazing at it in terror. This time I held my ground and the bed remained stationary.

But while watching for some sign of the knife again, I was startled at beholding the revolver right round the corner. It must have been held in the left hand as far out as the arm would reach. As usual, it appeared only to disappear. These twents kept me in a continual state of panic, for though fear of alarming the house prevented him from firing at random, his villainous head would have shown itself at the other end of the barrel unless I had driven it back instantly. Beset on every side, I really did not know what to do. The moon was almost gone, a heavy bank of clouds was driving across the sky, and—rip! the horrible knife leaped up close to my feet.

I made a rough guess at the time. A quarter-past twelve! In ten minutes either he or I must fall. These are commonplace words, yet if you will picture the scene in the dim light of the plain old-fashioned bedroom—on the bed, a desperate, jaded, wild-eyed man armed only with an empty gun, and under the bed, and supporting the foot of it on his back, a villainous-looking crawling brute, like a bleached nigger, plying a hunting-knife in one hand, and holding a revolver in the other—you can form some faint idea of our struggle.

Could I not fight him through the bed? I set to work tearing up pillows, bolsters, and clothes, and making of them a safer platform to stand upon, all the while holding the gun in one hand and obliged to stop every other moment to beat him back. When I had doubled up the mattress, I was secure from any further attacks from below, but I soon learned that I had exposed myself to a worse danger.

The sound having told him what I was doing, he lowered the bed to its original position, and was creeping along beneath the thin palliasse, through which the knife was darting like lightning. If I had ventured to follow him I should have been struck down in a moment, and yet I had to stop his progress at once. It was weary, weary work, this fight for dear life; no words can tell its weariness, but for the few remaining minutes I was determined to fight on. Quick as thought I flung the things back into their places, sprang across the bridge thus formed, and raised the gun aloft to dash down upon him. But he stopped, as he always did when I was ready waiting for him.

Five more minutes! Five short minutes! When they had elapsed I had determined to get down on the floor, make an attempt to strike at him under the bed, and, it could scarcely be doubted, get shot in so doing. As the time shortened I clung more temaciously to life, notwithstanding the sickening sensation that was gradually stealing away my energies, but I could not be guilty of such brutality as allowing Ralph to fall into this deadly mantrap.

While I was standing in the same place and attitude, my eye fell upon a coil of rope upon the top of the cupboard in the wall. It gave me a faint gleam of hope, inexpressibly sweet at such a moment. It had fastened up my book-box, and was, I knew, stont and strong. I reached out the gun, slipped it inside of the coil, and so got possession of it. After hastily making a running

noose, I laid the gun down with the barrel through the top rail, while I myself peered over the bottom one. It was a last resource; neck or nothing. I staked my life on this one throw. If my stratagem failed I was done for, as I had no longer the gun to drive my enemy back. To describe the wild excitement of that moment would be impossible. My heart was beating so frantically that I thought he also must hear it.

Working the gun with my foot so as to make him suppose I was at the head of the bed, I watched the bottom as a terrier watches for a rabbit. His stubby black hair came slowly into view. I could see it distinctly, for the moon had now gone so far round as to throw her light upon the spot. It came out cautiously, inch by inch. Great heavens! how my hands were trembling, as I stood there with the noose over my shoulder and my body bent forward in painful anxiety! Though scarcely able to restrain my impatience, I made another rattle with the gun. The brutal nigger-like head came out an inch or two more—a little further—a little further again—and then, Swoop! I crashed down upon it with the rope. I caught it; yes, I caught it, and pulled with every atom of strength remaining in my body. I can't tell you how I felt: I only know that one idea had fired my brain and driven out all others—that I had to pull if I would live.

Still this horrible being neither spoke nor uttered a single sound. Alarmed at the unaccountable silence, I leaned forward and peeped down at him. Flash! Bang! A bullet whistled passed my face, so close as almost to graze the skin. The shock caused me to recoil suddenly, but not before I had seen what made my heart sink like lead. He had got his right hand—the one with the knife—between the noose and his neck, and his left, holding the revolver, was free. If he should manage to cut the rope!

Setting my feet firmly against the rail, I pulled as I had never pulled before, my teeth clenched, my eyes glaring, all my muscles in knots. Something clattered upon the floor. Almost immediately afterwards the rope suddenly gave way, and I fell backwards powerless, defenceless, waiting for the shot that was to end my existence.

The horrors of a lifetime were concentrated in that moment, for it was but a moment.

There was a scamper on the stairs; a burst against the door which flew open, the lock being as defective as in old houses generally; and summoned by the sound of the revolver, Grip stood in the doorway, paused an instant to comprehend the situation, and then sprang at the man before he had time to use the knife.

I jumped frantically to my feet.

"Have at him, Grip!" I shouted in my excitement. "Have at him, good dog! Seize him, Grip! Seize him! Have at him again!"

I leaped over the rail, but the struggle was over. Grip had got my enemy securely by the throat.

When I had firmly bound him with the rope, I am ashamed to say that I did a very unmanly thing—fell down in a dead faint by the side of Grip's prisoner. At any rate, when Ralph returned shortly after half-past twelve, he found us lying side by side and the faithful old dog sitting at our heads as motionless as a soldier on guard.

JOHN HUBBARD'S HUSBANDS.

A STORY OF THE TENDER PASSION.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

NOT five minutes ago a pair of horses with their ears in white clattered away from our door and round the corner. The last glimpse I had of Thomas L. Gilmore, my husband of an hour, he was assisting a blushing young lady who calls me brother into the wedding coach. The circumstances were peculiar and not without their element of pathos. Legally Jenny is his wife, but morally he was pledged to me. Though I am of the male sex I have little doubt that I could get damages out of him for breach of promise of marriage. It was I, John Hubbard, whom he wooed and won. A score of times has he intimated to me by letter-post that I am the noblest of the other sex. Through the same convenient medium he has admitted an unaccountable but undoubtedly genuine yearning to kiss the hem of my garment (why the hem?), witting not that I have no garment of the kind he means, and consequently no hem to kiss. Otherwise T. L. Gilmore would ere this have been allowed to gratify his passion. I am still able to produce, in a court of justice, a copy of the note in which, after admitting that he was not wholly indifferent to me, I referred him to my mother. But of course I have no intention of making things unpleasant for him. He has taken Jenny with him believing her to be another, so no blame can attach to him. There is no probability of his ever discovering the mistake, unless I give him a hint, and I have already surrendered all claims to him. Yet a rush of thoughts, too turbulent for utterance, well up to my mouth as I take my last look of a husband who must never know me. He is my third. The pathetic and the practical are strangely blended in this life of ours. Gulping my emotions, I take a steady aim with a high-heeled slipper and stow in Thomas L. Gilmore's hat. It is curious that I should find a relief in this. Yet I would that we had parted otherwise than thus.

When the rumble of the wheels died away, I did not return to the wedding breakfast. There was something distasteful about it to me now, and I felt that the congratulatory toasts would fall fulsomely on my ear. The company, of course, laboured under the same misapprehension as the bridegroom. Slipping past the hum of speech-making, I escaped upstairs, and found myself in the room where we had first met. Why my feet should have carried me there I have not the most remote conception, unless it was because the house is of limited dimensions. It would be absurd to say that sentiment had anything to do with it. I may as well say at once that I never cared the smallest of silver coins for Thomas L. Gilmore. Good honest fellow, how well I remember that day, and what an ass I thought him! He sat in the armchair by the window on the antimacassar that my dear mother spreads so carefully over it to hide the rent in the velvet, and gaped at Jenny. I always wondered what men saw in Jenny, though she undoubtedly could pin herself artfully together. They should have seen her ten minutes after they left the house, for in

the privacy of the domestic circle Jenny liked her ease, and began to take out the pins the moment the front door closed. At this time Thomas L. Gilmore wore sensible kid gloves, a great improvement on the things he afterwards carried about with him. They, however, were a gift from Jenny, who sent them to him with a note saying that "every stitch in them was worked with her love." It was my other sister, Susy, who sewed them. In our family, you see, we play into each other's hands, and Susy does the sewing. She is the kind of girl that fellows think would make a fine wife for other fellows.

Jenny was at the piano floundering through a march in something, and foolish Thomas L. Gilmore clutched his hands in a nervous ecstasy. It was a daring thing in Jenny to do to try him with music the very first time he had been in the house, for her playing is perhaps the worst thing she does. On the other hand, she has a neat little back, which goes off in shakes and trembles at the slightest provocation, and it shows well on a piano-stool. When T. L. Gilmore ventured a small joke, for making which I had myself been taken to task by Jenny earlier in the day, that innocent little back went into convulsions. This daring experiment of Jenny's was warranted by results. He was a "gentleman farmer," and had come to us with an introduction, two things that perhaps justified my little sister—I am told that Thomas L. Gilmore calls her "Baby"—in putting him to the test at once. Though I am only in my twentieth year, the other two husbands whom I have morally married have, of course, made a cynic of me, and I already took a far greater interest in Thomas—as he used to sign himself—than he, at this early stage in our acquaintance, took in me. I had been invited upstairs with an eye to business—after Jenny had had him for a little while to herself—and I took in the situation at a glance. My cue at such a time is to say certain pre-arranged sarcastic things to Jenny, so that she may wither me up with pre-arranged smart replies. This is found useful where the victim has, or is supposed to have, a sense of humour. An occasional quarrel excepted, Jenny and I are really the best of friends, and always ready to give each other a lift. It is an understood thing in our family that none of the girls can get married without my assistance. I had already a splendid reputation to look back upon—even though we had missed fire once or twice—and Jenny's time had now evidently come. In our family the girls are the anglers, as it were, but I carry the gaff.

Well, that was our first meeting, and I give it this space because though there was nothing very remarkable about it, so much came of it. It is natural that one should dwell fondly on his first meeting with his third husband. I still feel Thomas L. Gilmore taking my hand in his, and holding it a moment longer than was absolutely necessary. When I heard him clanging the garden gate, I made a bolt for the pantry, just in time to catch Jenny—who is a die-away young thing in company—making off with the cold roast beef.

So far, it must be admitted, Jenny had done the running for herself, and I would be romancing if I pretend that Thomas L. Gilmore was already enamoured of her brother. It was not until he

left our pleasant little country town, and returned to the farm, which another man managed for him, that his feelings underwent a change. In other words, for this is what it amounts to, I did not step into the arena until the time for the letter-writing came. Letter-writing is my strong point, and none of our girls happens to be good at it. You may, of course, say that Jenny should not have been writing to a man to whom she was not yet by any means "engaged." I have neither time nor inclination to argue that point. What I wish to emphasize is that when the man to whom I now bear such a curious relation left us, he had been "struck" by Jenny, but no more. Her letters to him completed the business, and as I wrote them while she only copied them, it is plain that though this mixes things a little up, it was John Hubbard to whom he ultimately made an offer of the hand which Jenny Hubbard accepted. This will become more and more obvious as you read on.

Considered strictly from the artistic point of view, I am less proud of Thomas L. Gilmore than of some of my earlier conquests. I had brought at least one of them to my feet without even seeing him at all, while I had considerable opportunity of experimenting upon Gilmore before we took to corresponding. When Jenny, for instance, was to take him out for a walk, she would come to me beforehand, and I would put her up to a good thing. The time being autumn, and Thomas evidently a man of sentiment, I sent them strolling in a wood, where they would be compelled to wade through beds of rustling leaves. Jenny had then directions to look around her sadly, and murmur as if to herself, but still just loud enough for him to hear, something about—

Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves.

As she had no memory, I found it unadvisable to give her more than one of these at a time, in case she should stick in the middle of them, or fire them off prematurely in order to relieve her mind; but it is wonderful how far a couplet a day will go, and Gilmore never knew that the reason why Jenny was so comparatively silent during these walks was because she was saying her quotation over and over to herself. He conceived the notion that she was steeped in poetry just like himself, and that the beauty of Nature made her sad. Milly's husband has the same idea of Milly, and Nell's of Nell. If the three couples should ever happen to go for a walk in a wood late in the year, I have no doubt that force of habit would make the three dear little women all murmur at the same time—

Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves.

In all kinds of letter-writing I am equally at home. Where it is convenient, I prefer before beginning, it is true, to know something of my correspondent, even though it be nothing more than his views on the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, or the way he divides his hair. But if such information is not forthcoming, I generally know my man after his first letter has been handed over to me. I classify my husbands—her possibilities, Jenny called them—into the Humorous,

the Domesticated, and the Sentimental; and I find that so far all the gentlemen with whom I have corresponded with a view to matrimony have fallen under one or other of these heads. Thus the gentleman who, knowing no better, calls Milly his wife, affords us an interesting instance of the Humorous. My most jocular letters to him were masterpieces in their way, and did their work in a very short time. In his answers, which were also full of merry conceits, he used to say that Milly was the cleverest and wittiest girl he had ever met, and that he had taken the liberty of showing her last note to a friend, who had nearly gone into hysterics over it. Milly's reply to his treachery that she (meaning me) would be his was read aloud to the family before she copied it out for transmission, and was generally looked upon as worthy of the occasion. I was glad to see Milly married and fairly off my hands, however, for she has no sense of humour, and was the cause of constant anxiety to me lest she should miss out the joke now and then, and so perhaps spoil everything at the eleventh hour. I always looked over her copy carefully before it was sent off, and sometimes insisted on her re-writing it. This I found was the only way of ensuring accuracy.

With Mr. Philip Tomlinson, again, who thinks Nell is his wife, I had to pursue other tactics. He was never long in your company without telling you bluntly, whatever your sex, that he was a practical man, who, if he married at all, would choose a wife who would make him a comfortable home. A pretty face he scorned, but he admired a girl who could make dumplings and enjoyed working a sewing-machine. Nell is not just the young person I would have selected myself if I had only been on the look-out for a housekeeper; yet Nell is Mrs. Tomlinson now. This is how we managed Philip. First of all, Nell created a good impression by rushing to the garden when it was announced that Philip's rotund figure could be seen approaching, and being there discovered pulling up weeds. Not knowing certain flowers from weeds, Nell made a terrible mess of the garden, but we felt that, as this was her chance, considerable allowances should be made. The relief in the house, however, was general when Nelly gave up the garden and took Philip indoors. It was now her part to rush off from the drawing-room every little while to see that the scones were not burning, or to talk with the butcher's boy about the leg of mutton he had brought by mistake the day before yesterday. Nell even wanted to make a cake and give Philip some of it with his tea, but the others of us thought that this would be risking too much; so she had to content herself with talking about the cake and answering the door when Philip called, with her sleeves rolled up above her elbows. She had dimpled arms, Nell, and they looked well and business-like covered with flour. When she found, to her consternation, that the caller was Philip, she had of course to blush and explain that she was making a cake. The worst thing about Nell was that she ventured too much, and occasionally startled Philip into looking for his hat by some such injudicious remark as that if she had a horse she would feed him on oats, as they were so much cheaper than corn. However, the letter-writing allayed all his fears, and Philip is one of us now.

The agricultural columns in the newspapers were a great assistance to me in my correspondence with Philip. If it happened to be raining when I wrote to him in the furtherance of Nell's interests, I expressed a fear that the potato crop would suffer. In the same circumstances, when I was courting Milly's husband, I would have remarked that really it was time for a special commission to be appointed to inquire into the state of the weather. My versatility is indeed surprising. In the Philip period I posed as an authority on soup-kitchens, furniture polish, cooking, the trimming of hats, tract distributing, the making of preserves, &c. I never began a letter without having to admit that I had spent the morning in dusting the back parlour or making a pie, and I had always to break off suddenly in case the pancakes were burning. No wonder that Philip was unable to stand it long, and was always writing to me (nominally to Nell) to hasten the happy day. The whole affair was an artistic triumph, mainly owing to Nelly's good sense in putting herself entirely into my hands. Even the quantity of kisses sent was strictly in accordance with my directions.

As I was always a little inclined to the sentimental, less credit is perhaps due to me for my manipulation of Thomas L. Gilmore. Thomas is sentimental even to morbidness, and used to be so carried away by the beauty of my figures of speech that he answered me in verse. These effusions were addressed to Jenny, but of course that was because the author knew no better. In my answers I always told him which lines I liked best, and hoped he would not be angry though I tried to set them to music. He said that he would not be angry. Many a pretty thing have I said to T. L. Gilmore about the brevity of life, and the silent tomb, and hearts that beat as one. He has to this day documentary evidence that his "Reflections on the Dying Year" (privately printed) affected me to tears, and that I loved him from the first moment I saw him. I have hinted to him that if he was untrue to me it would break the heart I long ago entrusted to his keeping, and he knows that the rest of the world is nothing to me so long as he is by my side. He has gratified me more than he can think by saying that though his mother was at first adverse to the match, my beautiful letter in which I beseeched her for a little, a very little of her love, for her noble son's sake, has completely brought her round. Jenny had fifty wedding gifts, and thanked every donor in a suitable manner to my dictation. To the young ladies I was artlessly gushing, to the young gentlemen maddeningly formal; the old ladies I almost made to cry by my beautiful references to the days when they too were young, and with the bald-headed men I fear I flirted. As I sit here in the room where I have so frequently wooed and won, within sound of the merry-making downstairs, and sadly light my pipe with Thomas's "Elegy written on a Rotten Tree-trunk," a soft melancholy steals over me and I lean my head upon my hands.

At long intervals I pay a brief visit to my husbands, with feelings that can be more easily imagined than expressed. At such times it is all I can do to keep from bursting into a passion of tears. If they only knew! It affords me food for reflection to note that Philip thinks he has got

the most domesticated of wives, and that Milly keeps her reputation as a humorist. But it is when their dear little children crawl up my legs and amuse themselves tearing the buttons off my coat that I feel my position most keenly. What is my relation to these little babbling creatures? They call me uncle, but I am no ordinary uncle to them. Crushing my handkerchief into my eyes to conceal my emotion I lay them in a heap on the floor, and seizing my hat wander off in the direction of my solitary chambers.

UNCOMMUNICATED LOVE.

THERE is more love in the world than we are apt to believe. There is probably more hate also; but is that a reason why we should deny the love? It is worth while to redeem, if we possibly can, our hearts from the carking misanthropics which gnaw into them; and we can do this very readily by considering that, cynics and the blight notwithstanding, there are strong reasons for thinking better of men and women than, as a rule, we do.

It is a pathetic truth that very much of our life is incommunicable. The inmost thoughts and feelings, the deepest personal secrets, both of good and of evil, are wholly known only by the heart that bears them, and, as often as not, are never suspected, even by those nearest and most able to perceive. Every one of us is, each in his way and degree, "a stranger in the earth."

But there is a good deal not communicated that might be—which, in certain respects, is something to be thankful for. There are many things which had better not be said under any circumstances; and there are many more that nobody in this world cares to hear, or could be induced to listen to, even for a heavy consideration. Unexpressed thoughts, however, are often right and beautiful. Thackeray never said a truer thing than this:—"There are great unspoken thanks before a fair scene of Nature: at a sun-setting below a glorious sea, or a moon and a host of stars shining over it; at a bunch of children playing in the street, or a group of flowers by a hedge-side, or a bird singing there. At a hundred moments or occurrences of the day good thoughts pass through the mind which are never spoken: prayers are made which are never said; and *Te Deum* is sung without church, clerk, choristers, parson, or organ." This is certainly true, and full of consolation for many a silent heart.

Few there are who have not about them people whom they know love them, and whom they love. These affections are continually demonstrated; told in simple words every night and day; revealed in the eye's silent eloquence; proved by little sacrifices as touching as they are constant. But there is much love that is not told, and perhaps cannot be told. Words, looks, smiles, tears, sacrifices—these are but the outward signs of what is infinite and inexpressible. What wife, however great her happiness, knows to the full how much she is loved? What proud and trusting husband is acquainted with half the yearnings of that affection which blesses his life? No doubt imagination helps the soul to guess at what lies

beyond the horizon of visible signs ; but how far and how truly ? We know that there are certain accumulations of numbers which are definable, and can be symbolized in terms, but which cannot be comprehended at one view. The power of man's intellect is far-reaching ; but even to the mightiest brain there comes a point when the mental image, and therefore the whole conception and understanding, becomes nebulous, and melts mysteriously away into the Unknowable. If this is true of things physical, if it is true of the grains of sand on the shore, and true of the star-clusters—the immeasurable concourse of glory and magnificence, which to our eyes seems no more than the pale ghost of a little silvery cloud haunting the chambers of eternal night; if it is true of these, it must be still more true of the human soul, which is at least as mysterious as the universe itself. Indeed it were easier to measure the solar system than to fathom the depths of the most profound and masterful of human passions. Take, for instance, the mother's love for her child. How can that be expressed ? She may be far away from it, or discretion ties her tongue, yet day by day, and all day long, night by night, and all night long, she cares for it, yearns over it, prays for it, weeps or rejoices for it. The prodigal may forget the very existence of his mother ; but she loves on and on, and the untold, untellable story of her injured heart is known only to her God and herself.

The affections of many persons in this withered world are suppressed by force—that is to say, by what are called “the judicious customs of society.” This is especially true of the fair sex. “She never told her love” might be said of many more women than it is, though they do contrive to show it in other ways than the ways of speech. The particular lady of whom the words just quoted were first used, did she not “let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, feed on her damask cheek ?” Truly, she must be a deep and subtle dissembler who, in such a case, shows absolutely no sign to the discerning eye. But then there are so few discerning eyes in the world ; and the customs of society are so judicious ! The great need of the one, and the beautiful superfluity of the other, have resulted in untold misery, in innumerable broken hearts. But the love survives, and often lies hidden from mortal sight and sympathy until the grave hides it in silence for ever.

It is, indeed, strikingly true that, in spite of the incessant conflicts of life, the strife that devastate the spirit, an infinite deal of love survives to wander, so to speak, alone and dejected in the ruins of its empire. How devoted you are to your friend ! You loved him. You quarrelled. False notions of self-respect or mere obstinacy keep you apart. Yet you both love still, and tell it not ! Very often love is disguised in a mask of hate ; and (notwithstanding the remarks of the cynics) there is less falsehood in our professions of love than in our professions of indifference. A man who basely injures another shows that he really loves him in that he assumes a callousness that he cannot feel, and conceals the shame that he feels only too deeply ; and often he whom you consider your enemy really loves you in his heart of hearts.

Is there any utility in this uncommunicated love ? We might as reasonably inquire if there is any “utility” in the glory of a sun-lit sea, in the murmurs of the wind among the leaves, in the song of birds, or the scent of flowers. It leads often to darkness and despair, but it leads oftener to light and strength, to magnanimity, to charity and patience and hope. Folly and pride and care are abroad in the world, no doubt ; and they keep man from man, and stifle happiness ; but if you consider this question of uncommunicated love at all carefully, you must see that, in spite of seeming paradoxes and bewildering contradictions, love silently, secretly governs all the world.

H. V. BARNETT.

TAKING TIME TO CONSIDER.

THE eminent orientalist, Colebrook, held the office of District Judge at a country town in India, and, though of course a highly intelligent man, was not so much esteemed on the rural bench by reason of some infirmity of judgment, which led him to take inordinate time in arriving at a decision. The following anecdote still lingers in the district where his multifarious labours lay.

He had had a difficult case of robbery before him ; one of those robberies engaged in by many persons which in that country are called *dacoitres*. The night was said to have been moonless, but also cloudless, and the village merchant, whose house had been robbed, had brought witnesses to swear to the identity of several of the robbers. It was admitted that the robbers were muffed up, but still their outlines, their voices, were sufficient to betray who they were. When the case was concluded, Colebrook took time to consider. Days passed, but no decision. At length such a night came round as the judge required—moonless but cloudless. All his house servants, his grooms, gardeners, &c., the mob of an Indian establishment, were directed to muffle themselves up and to make an attack on his house at midnight, and not to be sparing in cries, so that the fact might be tested whether voices could in a hubbub be readily recognized. The attack came off, and the old judge, in his dressing-gown and slippers, hovered here and there taking observations. The treasury was close at hand. Some meddler ran and told the Soubahdar, who was sleeping under a tree, that robbers were just upon him. He called out the Sepoy guard ; they rushed to arms. There was a clatter of muskets. The men were got in line for firing. Then the police came up from a neighbouring station. The pretended robbers got into a terrible fright, and began to shout out that they were not real robbers, only histrio ones. Tremendous confusion reigned, and at length up galloped the magistrate. A confidential servant of Colebrook rushed to his side to explain matters.

“All a mistake, good sir,” he cried. “It is only my master, the Judge, taking time to consider.”

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LONDON : OCTOBER 10, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"YES, SIR."

BY INA STANHOPE.

CHAPTER I.

"SOMETHING MUST, SHALL BE DONE."

"IT is always the same, there's not such another house in the kingdom, I'll venture to say. No matter if my very living depends upon it; I can never ask any one home. Home! A nice home it is to come to after a trying day of disappointments and weariness—head aching, limbs aching, heart aching—I get nothing but reproaches because I am not more successful—richer. Yet it seems to me I give as much as most men, and get infinitely less than any other I know in return. I am about sick of it all."

"And whose fault is it, Mr. Elisdon, if you are poor? Isn't it simply shameful that at your time of life, with the chances you have had, that you should be in no better position than you are?"

"Position! That is just the point. In town my position is good enough, I'm thought to be a much richer man than I am."

"As you ought to be," retorts Mrs. Elisdon.

"As I ought to be, certainly," replies her husband, bitterly. "But, as you asked just now, whose fault is it that I am not so? How many of those chances might have become certainties if I could now and then have asked a business friend or colleague to dine or spend an evening at my own home? But no, you have always set your face dead against it. The trouble, the expense, it could never be done, and so on. So I have either to go to the expense of a dinner in town, or to let the chance drop."

"It is shameful of you to abuse me in this fashion, Mr. Elisdon. Don't I work like a slave, even going without a servant?"

"Well, can I help that? I give every penny I can afford, and more than I can afford. Other women, with no more to do with, can manage to entertain their own and their husband's friends."

"Can they? You are telling falsehoods, Mr. Elisdon, and you know it."

"You know I am not. Can you deny one of the facts I have asserted? Have I a single friend who visits me here in my own home? And if by any chance I ask any one, you take good care to give them such a reception that they never willingly come again."

At this point in the unhappy wrangle between husband and wife the postman's knock is heard. The letter proves to be for Mr. Elisdon.

"Pray listen," he says ironically, and reading from the epistle in his hand, "Colonel Sir John Hope, of Hope Court, writes to say:—he will do himself the honour of calling upon me to-morrow evening, at my private residence, to talk over the proposed scheme for a line of railway to pass through Hope Park."

"Of course he can't come here," exclaims Mrs. Elisdon irritably.

"Of course he can't," repeats Mr. Elisdon with a sneer, "and so goes this chance like the rest. I'll never trouble about anything again; you may just do as you can. I'll cut the whole thing, for there's not a member of the family I have to provide for who has one jot of consideration, much less sympathy, for me."

With these words he leaves the room, when Mrs. Elisdon breaks forth into loud complaints against his selfishness, his unreasonableness, the hardness of her life, *et cetera*.

"But it is very hard for him, mamma," says Marion, the eldest daughter.

"Oh you always take his part, Marion, you haven't the least consideration for me."

Marion wisely ignores this speech, but she cannot help thinking of the foolish woman in the Book of Proverbs who plucketh her house down with her own hands. Mrs. Elisdon is her stepmother. Her own mother died when she and her sisters and brothers were quite small children, and Mr. Elisdon, with a young family upon his hands, could do nothing better, he thought, than marry again.

The brothers are all married—nothing prevents

men marrying—but she and her sisters are still single, and for the best of reasons. Whenever a suitor presents himself, Mrs. Elisdon is downright rude to him until she drives him away. The result of which is that at the present moment there is but one male creature who has sufficient courage to still persist in visiting them, and Marion is obliged to snub him now and again for fear Mrs. Elisdon should imagine there was any “philandering” going on. Albeit the eldest daughter of the house is turned thirty.

She is feeling very sore and grieved for her father just now. She only of them all seems to comprehend what a disappointment his life is to him. A man of great abilities, and sensitive to a degree, yet naturally buoyant and hopeful, she has seen that hopefulness crushed again and again. Mrs. Elisdon’s life is not too easy either; she has, as she herself says, “plenty of hard work and no prospect of anything else, whereas if she had married a butcher instead of a clever man she would have been able to have servants and money in her pocket.”

“And now this last chance,” thinks Marion sadly, “It does seem hard that it must be let to go like the rest. Oh, it must not!” impulsively, “something must, shall be done to prevent it.”

“It is a great pity, mamma, don’t you think?” she says, tentatively, “If—if—it could only be managed?”

“I really think you are out of your mind, Marion,” says Mrs. Elisdon, sharply. “Managed, indeed, without a servant, with that old carpet in the drawing-room, too, with—with nothing decent! But there, you are just like your father, you have no consideration. You can suggest all sorts of impossibilities, perhaps you’ll find the servant and the carpet?”

“I’ll undertake to find the servant if I can’t the carpet,” says Marion, brightly, “and don’t you see, mother, the carpet will quickly follow.”

“No, I don’t see.”

“Why, if Sir John Hope should approve of the scheme, money will come of it, and then, as a matter of course, carpets and chintzes will follow.”

“Ah, no such luck for us,” sighs Mrs. Elisdon, “there never is.”

“Well, at least let us give this chance a trial,” answers Marion, earnestly, “I’ll find the servant.”

“Don’t talk such utter nonsense, Marion, you know it can’t be done.”

“I don’t know anything of the kind,” says Miss Elisdon, decisively, determined to gain her point this once if never again. “Now, just listen, mamma, to my plan—it is simple enough. It will be dark, or nearly so, when Colonel Sir John Hope arrives. Of course, there will be no question of dinner. Probably he will not stay more than an hour, at least we are not supposed to imagine he will. So, then, some sherry, whiskey—I fancy he is Scotch so he will most likely prefer the whiskey—and biscuits will be sufficient. There, there’s not much difficulty about that, is there?”

“Not much difficulty? Oh, dear no, of course not. But with your usual cleverness, Marion, you have overlooked the principal item—a well-behaved woman to open the door, to carry up the tray, and answer the bell.”

“Mamma, I told you I would provide the servant.”

“Oh, yes, you told me, I know. It is easy to talk, but I know what it will be, at the last moment, no servant will be forthcoming.”

“The servant, just such a one as you describe, shall be here,” says Marion, emphatically.

* * * * *

“Of all the mad ideas! It will be discovered, and then what shall we look like? I won’t consent to it, Marion. I shall tell your father, as soon as he comes in, and he shall put a stop to it.”

“Oh, mamma, do be reasonable!” says Marion, nearly beside herself. With fear and trembling she has kept her grand *coup d’état*, a secret until the last moment, when Mrs. Elisdon worrying about the non-appearance of the promised servant, Marion presents herself in that character, arrayed in a neat print gown and the most fascinating of caps, before her step-mother’s horrified and astonished gaze.

“Reasonable?” reiterates Mrs. Elisdon. “There is no such thing as reason in this family. And pray, what are we to do the next time he comes?”

“It is not at all likely he will come again, but if he should, we must get a proper servant—he will not notice the difference.”

“Notice the difference or not I won’t consent to it, Marion, so there’s an end to the matter. Go and take off those things.”

“It is too late now,” says Marion, triumphantly, as a loud double knock announces the arrival of Colonel Sir John Hope, Baronet.

With heightened colour Marion hastens to open the door.

“Mr. Elisdon?” interrogates Sir John.

“Yes, sir,” answers Marion, gravely. “Will you walk in, sir,” and she leads the way to the shabby drawing-room, not looking so bad however in the subdued light. Then for an instant, she forgets her rôle—not leaving the room after offering him a chair. Recollecting herself, she retrieves her position by asking, “What name, sir, if you please?”

He hands her his card.

“Thank you, sir,” and she glides from the room.

“By Jove! what a—hum—graceful woman,” mutters Sir John in an astonished tone, as the door closes behind her.

“Elisdon is not too well off, I should imagine,” he soliloquizes, glancing at the faded carpet. “His misfortune not his fault, I expect. Refined family though, if the servant is a type of the rest of the household.”

Outside the door Marion briefly sums up the distinguished visitor: “Not too handsome. Not too young. Short—brusque in manner. Scotch undoubtedly. I like Scotch people, generally, I think I like him. Hark, there is father—now comes the tug of war.”

“Marion,” calls Mrs. Elisdon.

“Coming,” replies her step-daughter in a muffled voice.

“Why, Marion, what in the name of common sense is the meaning of this?” asked her father angrily.

“Yes, did you ever hear of such a thing in your life before?” says Mrs. Elisdon.

“Father,” says Marion, meekly, “I did it for the best.”

"Go at once and take those things off," continues Mr. Elisdon, sternly.

"I am afraid it would be worse than useless to do so now, because I have already seen Sir John Hope, and it will look so absurd for any of us to wait upon him, with a supposed woman-servant in the house. Let me carry it through, indeed I see no help for it."

So Mr. Eliston is perforce obliged to yield.

It is a trial almost beyond his gravity, however, when Marion having brought up the tray with refreshments, asks in the most respectful voice: "Hot water, sir, or cold?"

No *contretemps* happens to betray her, her sisters taking care to keep out of the room when she is in it. But presently, Janey, the youngest comes to her in great haste.

"Oh, Polly, father wants you to play some of those old ballads," she says.

"What is to be done now?" exclaims Marion, in tragic horror. "Whatever induced the pater to think of such a thing?"

"Why Colonel Hope said he was very fond of simple ballads: when father, without thinking, I suppose, said, 'my daughter sings them very well, I consider.' 'I should like to hear her, then,' says Sir John, brusquely. He is awfully Scotch, Marion, I can tell you."

"He is none the worse for that, I suppose," answers Miss Elisdon, curtly.

"Oh, I don't know. I have a fancy that Judas was a Scotchman—it is thought he had red hair, and most Scotchmen have red hair you know," says Janey, emphatically.

"What nonsense. Well, Colonel Hope need not trouble you on that account, seeing that he is very bald."

"Marion, you ought to be Scotch yourself, you can be so—so abrupt."

"Total mistake, my dear child; I pride myself upon being English to the backbone."

"Well, but what are you going to do, Marion?" says Janey.

"Obey orders, I suppose," she replies, "I see no help for it."

A quarter of an hour later Miss Elisdon appears in the drawing-room in a white dress adorned with pink ribbons, her hair coiled high up her head, "an alarming swell," as Janey afterwards tells her. She affects a languid grace of manner that Sir John Hope finds particularly attractive, yet under protest, and angry because he does so.

"Grand lady of the family, evidently," he thinks. "Finds it too much trouble to give a fellow more than two words at a time. But, by Jove, what an extraordinary likeness to that elegant serving maid!" as Marion rises to go to the piano. "Quite unaccountably so, in spite of her languid airs."

The Baronet is a shrewd Scotchman, and when in the course of a conversation between himself and Mr. Elisdon, he happens suddenly to note how the languid ladyfied daughter's face lights up, he smiles curiously to himself, while Marion, catching that smile, thinks it makes him look quite handsome.

He contrives to draw her into the conversation. Thrown off her guard her languor disappears like magic, and soon they are engaged in an animated discussion, which flits from one subject to another with the greatest ease and pleasantness. When

the Colonel takes his leave they are mutually interested in each other.

"It is awfully nice to talk to a clever man," thinks Marion, the last thing before sleeping that night. "Yes, awfully nice; it is like drinking champagne—so exhilarating."

While Sir John, during his homeward journey, finds himself continually thinking of Marion Elisdon and the tall waiting-maid.

"I always did admire tall women," he says dreamily, between puffs at his cigar. "There is an undulating grace of movement about them, an unstudied ease and elegance of attitude in repose, a — John you're an ass. Have you come forth scathless from a hundred fights to be smitten by a —. By George, I don't know which of them it is. Can it be that? No! And yet the likeness is most startling. Yet, if my suspicion is correct, what can have been her motive?" *

"Marion, Marion, where are you?" says Janey coming panting into her sister's room. "Oh, here is a dilemma!"

"What is the matter?" asks Marion.

"Oh, nothing," says Janey, exasperated at the cool way in which Marion receives her. "A mere trifle, only that Sir John Hope is coming again this evening. Father has just wired to apprise us of the fact.

"Oh, dear," gasps Marion, with a groan, "What is to be done now?"

"Why you must play the part of Abigail again, of course," answers Janey, coolly.

"I wish, with all my heart, I had never undertaken the part at all. Janey, I can't do it again, I shall betray myself, or worse, he'll discover the cheat, and then what will he think of me?"

"Oh, he'll not find you out, and you must not come into the room in your own proper person, that is all. You must manage it somehow, mamma quite takes it for granted that you'll do it again to-night."

"Does she?" says Marion bitterly. "Yes, it is only the first time that any enormity shocks mamma. But understand, Janey, if he ever comes again you may all turn servants, or do what you like. I'll never, after to-night, play the part again!"

"You never need have done so, Marion, it was your own suggestion entirely," says Janey, not too amiably.

"Oh, no doubt," answers Marion grimly; "but the next time the serving maid will have gone for a holiday, remember."

"Very well, anything you like, if only you assume the character for this once," answers Janey coolly. "Father thinks he will be here about seven o'clock."

"And it is nearly six now, you had better leave me if I am to be ready in time."

It is with uncomfortable forebodings that Marion dons her neat servant's attire. She has scarcely done so when the baronet's knock sets her heart beating.

"Why he was not to be here till seven, and it is barely half-past six. Now, Marion, call up all your courage for you will need it."

Thus apostrophizing herself, she goes to the door. It is a clear, bright evening, and the light is full upon her face when she opens it. Sir John gives her one keen glance as he inquires—

"Is your master at home?"

The hot colour mounts to her very temples at this unexpected question, but she answers quietly—

"No, sir, but he will be in soon. Will you wait?"

"Yes, thank you, I will."

She shows him into the drawing-room. Before she can escape, however, he says—

"Is Miss Elisdon at home?"

"Which of the ladies do you mean, sir?" she asks with trembling lips.

"Miss Elisdon, Miss Marion" (he has got her name fast enough).

At this, her self-possession completely deserts her, and instead of making an excuse, she just stammers out, "Yes, sir."

"Will you present my compliments to Miss Elisdon and say I shall be greatly obliged if she will see me for a few moments."

"I—I—think she is engaged, sir."

"I hope not. Will you be good enough to give her my message?"

Marion's eyes flash at his haughty tone.

"Certainly, sir," and she sails from the room in a very unservantlike manner.

"Hum, not so good an actress as I imagined," mutters Sir John. "I am quite convinced though, now. What can be her object? It gets over me altogether. She'll not come, of course. Send some excuse or perhaps take no notice at all. But I'll sift the matter to the bottom, now I have begun."

Meanwhile Marion, in hot anger, determines, come what may, she will carry out her part. With a rapidity of thought and movement only known to lithe, tall women, she changes her servant's garb for a walking dress—hat, gloves, sunshade, all complete. Fortune favours her, no one else knowing that Colonel Hope has arrived yet. She gently opens the house-door, then gives an imposing rat-a-tat, closes the door as if she had been let in, then walks deliberately into the drawing-room.

"Sir John Hope!" she exclaims in polite astonishment.

Sir John feels thoroughly nonplussed; it is barely ten minutes since the serving-maid left the room. He is convinced now, that he has made a mistake. He sees how it has arisen: there is a strong likeness between mistress and maid, yet not so very strong, after all, he begins to think. The serving-woman is a very superior person, indeed, for her position, but Miss Elisdon is elegant. He now dismisses his former suspicion with contempt.

Marion exerts herself to talk. But soon no exertion is needed, their ideas and sentiments seem to flow in much the same channels; and when such is the case with any two people, especially if of opposite sex, the conversation seldom if ever flags. Both are astonished when the pendule chimes seven.

"Seven o'clock!" exclaims Marion, rising with unfeigned reluctance. "Sir John, I must be rude enough to leave you—I—have an appointment. Perhaps—may I presume to ask you to tell my father so?"

"Assuredly," answers Sir John politely, but somewhat stiffly. His vanity is piqued to think that the young lady who has seemed to enjoy their

tête-à-tête almost as much as himself, can so coolly leave him for the rest of the evening. He attends her to the door of the room, holding it open for her to pass out.

"Gone to meet some fellow, I suppose," he mutters savagely. "If it had been anything less important she would have stayed, I am certain. John Hope, you are a conceited ass. What should any woman care about you for? You are nearer fifty than forty, and bald as the palm of your hand. Pooch! have you not a title, and an income of some five thousand per annum? Where is the woman, from fifteen to fifty, who wouldn't adore you, who wouldn't swear to you solemnly (the younger the more glibly) that you were the first and only love of her life? Bah! plain John Hope, unknown, and earning only a few pounds a week, how would he fare at their hands, any of them?"

"Will you take a glass of wine or a little whiskey and water, sir?" asks the quiet voice of the waiting maid.

Sir John starts visibly.

"I—I beg your pardon." He colours; this is not exactly the way for a gentleman to address a servant, no matter how graceful or refined, and Sir John, whatever his faults, is a gentleman, none the less that he adds brusquely—

"I did not hear you come in."

"No, sir?" meekly. "Which will you take, sir?"

"Whiskey and water, thank you."

"Cold or hot water, sir?"

"Cold"—shortly.

"Yes, sir."

"Mr. Elisdon has not come home yet, I suppose?" enquires Sir John.

"No, sir."

"Mrs. Elisdon, quite well I hope?"

"No, sir, she is obliged to keep her room with a severe headache."

"Indeed! I am sorry. Did—er—did you give my message to Miss Elisdon?"

"No, sir. The young ladies are out."

"Oh! Are they likely to return soon—any of them?"

"No, sir; I think not."

"Thank you."

The tall waiting maid after handing him his whiskey and water, draws down the blinds and lights the lamp. Somehow he cannot help his eyes following her every movement, and he finds himself admiring the deaf, quiet way in which she does everything.

"I must have been a fool to fancy such a thing," muses the baronet, as the door closes noiselessly behind her. "She is a thoroughly trained domestic—such a one as my old mother would have delighted in—quiet and industrious, while Miss Marion, though very charming, is undoubtedly indolent, I should say. Yet the likeness is most remarkable. I wonder where she has gone? I wish I had asked if they were all together, I—"

Again the servant enters, a telegram in her hand.

"My mistress desired me to give you this, sir."

Sir John takes it and reads: "Quite unable to get home. Detained by important business. Apologise to Sir John for me."

It is addressed to Miss Elisdon. The Baronet's heart beats a trifle quicker.

"Has Miss Elisdon returned, then?" he asks eagerly.

The waiting maid pauses an instant before she replies.

"The young ladies have not returned yet, sir," she says.

Sir John looks, as he feels, disappointed.

"They—they are all together, I presume?"

"No, I believe not, sir," a slight pause. "Miss Jane and Miss Caroline have gone to Mr. Robert Elisdon's, sir."

"How aggravating she is," thinks Sir John. "And—er—Miss Elisdon—is by herself, I suppose?" he asks awkwardly.

"No, sir," an odd smile flickers across the waiting maid's face.

It angers Sir John strangely: "Of course, it is as I supposed; she is engaged to some jackanapes of a fellow, and this woman knows it, and is laughing in her sleeve because I am making such an utter ass of myself."

"Make my compliments to the family," he says haughtily, "and say that I shall feel obliged if Mr. Elisdon will call upon me at my chambers in town."

"Yes, sir," replies the waiting maid meekly, but her lips are twitching, and he can see she has the greatest difficulty to restrain her laughter.

She accompanies him to the hall, hands him his hat, his stick, and opens the door for him.

Then he relents. "I fear I have given you a great deal of trouble, young woman, in answering so many questions," he says, "Here is half-a-crown for you."

The colour flames into her face, and she strikes his out-stretched hand passionately away, making the half-crown fly to the other side of the hall.

"How dare you insult me so?" she pants, with flashing eyes and dilating nostrils.

Sir John turns fiery red—gives one comprehensive look into her face, then dashes down the steps, nor slackens his pace until more than half-way to the railway station.

Then he takes out his handkerchief and wipes the perspiration from his forehead.

"By George! What a consummate actress! I really don't know, figuratively speaking, whether I am on my head or my heels. What, in the name of all that's curious, can be her motive? Well, one thing is certain—she hasn't been with any other fellow, to-night."

And angry and disgusted, as he assures himself he is, there is an odd satisfaction in this thought.

"What a fury!" he continues. "That wasn't acting—she'll be just mad to think that after all her care she has betrayed herself."

He is quite right. No sooner has the door closed behind him than Marion drops into a hall chair and bursts into passionate weeping.

"Oh, he knows! He must. What will he think? How he must despise me!" she sobs. "I wish he had never come or I had never seen him."

She is scarcely honest in this last assertion, however.

Presently she set to work to find the half-crown. When she does she shews her indignation by kissing it. Furthermore, when she retires that night that clumsy coin is carefully and tenderly deposited under her pillow; this, no doubt, accounts for her sleeping so soundly.

But Sir John Hope does not find sleep come so easily. He is intensely restless, and keeps repeat-

ing incessantly, "What can be her motive? If I only knew her motive—I think if she cares—I could—yes, I would forgive her. I wonder if she does? Well, I don't fancy she cares for any other man."

CHAPTER II.

A FORTUNE LOST—BUT HAPPINESS GAINED.

A WEEK—a fortnight goes by, and nothing more is heard of Colonel Sir John Hope by the Elisdon family.

Marion takes herself severely to task for the odd, restless feeling that possesses her, the wish that he would come, if only to tell her how much he despises her for the part she has played. Once or twice her father mentions his name in connection with the "Bill" that is to go before Parliament in the following November.

"We shall get it, of course," says Mr. Elisdon, "as there will be no opposition, Sir John having generously withdrawn his. It really is most magnanimous on his part, as he so much disliked the idea of a railway cutting through his park."

Marion privately thinks it is very generous of him indeed.

Another week passes, and still he does not come, and Miss Elisdon is forced to the conclusion that he so utterly despises her that he will never come again.

"I am very sorry," she says sadly to herself, "for I liked him better, I think, than any one I ever met before. But no doubt it is best as it is, I—might have come to care for him too well, and—and he is a baronet, with five thousand a year. Even supposing—! He would never have believed that I cared for himself alone. No, I do not forget what he said that evening—that any woman, from fifteen to fifty, would adore him for his title and wealth, but never for himself. Yes, it is best as it is. Men are very unwise in these things; they do not understand that love is the pearl of great price. If they did, they would only too gladly sell all that they have to possess it. Yet some of us who have the priceless pearl of a true devotion to bestow, are so foolish as to cast it before swine, and meet with the reward to be expected from such natures—they turn and trample upon it, and rend our hearts with anguish and bitter shame. Yes, I am glad after all that he has not come—it has shown me my danger. Henceforth I will give nothing but friendship to any man."

By which it will be seen that Marion Elisdon was not in a very happy frame of mind at this time.

They are all in the garden one evening, lawn-tennis being in full swing. Marion, though an enthusiast in the game, having given up after one set, is sitting in the summer-house watching the others play. Presently the garden gate gives a bang, but she does not turn her head, for her father invariably comes in this way during the summer months.

"Well, and how are ye, Miss Elisdon?" asks a voice, she already knows full well, beside her.

"Sir John!" she exclaims in surprise.

"Yes, it's me," he replies, his dark eyes gleaming with amusement.

"What shocking grammar," she says loftily.

"Yes, I believe it is. But you haven't answered my question."

"Oh, I am very well, thanks."

"I am glad to hear it. Meanwhile, if you have no objection, Miss Elisdon, I'll sit down."

"I beg your pardon, Sir John."

"I think you ought," he says coolly, as he seats himself beside her. Then they both relapsed into an awkward silence.

Presently she raises her eyes to meet his fixed upon her with an intent, searching gaze.

"Don't despise me quite, Sir John," she says pleadingly. "I—indeed if you knew—I could not help it—I wish with all my heart I never had!" she continues brokenly.

"Hush," he says gently, and taking her hand in his. "I despise you? I—you are very foolish." Then gravely, "I quite understand now. I fear I have been very rude."

"Yes, indeed, you have, very," she answers, trying to look severe, but it is a dead failure. She is feeling very happy for he knows, and he does not despise her; indeed, are they not better friends than ever?

"Sir John," she says, "I want to ask you something!"

"I will do anything you ask me," he says ardently.

"Then please don't let my father know that—you know?"

"Miss Elisdon, I had hoped, up to the present time, that I had some claim to the title of gentleman," says Sir John in a hurt tone.

"I never doubted it for an instant, or I should not be asking you such a question," she replies warmly.

"My goodness, Jane, if there isn't that Colonel Sir John Hope, sitting in the summer-house talking to Marion!" exclaims Mrs. Elisdon in a loud aside to her youngest daughter. "What is to be done now? I don't see how Marion is to manage it to-night."

Of course Sir John hears every word, and Marion knows that he does, but for her sake he makes a pretence of not having done so. He need not, however, for she does not mind now.

Mrs. Elisdon makes elaborate excuses for their being without a servant "*just now*," and tells not a few fibs in consequence. Sir John listens politely but in silence, thereby incurring her lasting displeasure, which deepens into positive dislike as she notes how he devotes himself to Marion for the rest of the evening.

"I see what this means," she says angrily to Janey, "more philandering. Your sister Marion would flirt with a broomstick if she could get nothing better."

"Oh, no, mamma, she wouldn't," answers Janey, demurely, "because a broomstick couldn't talk in return, and that wouldn't suit Marion at all."

"Well, I detest philandering! It is the most senseless, idiotic rubbish, upsetting every one else."

Sir John prolongs his stay to a late hour, ostensibly to see Mr. Elisdon, who, for some reason, has not returned yet. But at last Mrs. Elisdon's hints are so unmistakable that he is obliged to make his adieux.

Marion sees him to the door. They both feel very conscious, for both remember the last time.

"Can you forgive me?" asks Sir John, clasping her hand closely, and blushing like a schoolboy.

"I'll try," she answers, arrogantly, but her lashes are wet.

"What became of that half-crown?" he says, shamefacedly.

It is now Marion's turn to blush.

"Don't ask me, Sir John," entreatingly.

Sir John's face is radiant. "I won't if you tell me not to—"

"Marion," calls Mrs. Elisdon, sharply.

"Good night, Sir John," she says, hurriedly.

"Good night. God keep ye," he whispers, huskily. A close handclasp and he is gone.

"She does care," says Sir John, forgetting to give his usual vigorous puffs at his cigar, which has gone out in consequence—that night. "Yes, she does care—for me, God bless her. I know she does. I feel years younger to-night. Love is youth—the heart that loves truly can never grow old. After all, it is the best and sweetest gift the good God has to bestow upon his creatures."

The "Bill" has passed, and Mrs. Elisdon is already assuming airs of grandeur with the prospect of new carpets, chintzes, and a "thorough servant" in view. She has persistently snubbed Sir John during these months, but in spite of all her efforts to the contrary he still comes.

But alas, he is Sir John Hope, of Hope Court and Park, no longer. A nephew, the son of an elder brother, from whom he, Sir John, inherited the title and estates—of whose existence he had never heard, having turned up, "claimant" fashion, from some out-of-the-way place in the Andes.

Unlike the "Claimant," however, the nephew has been able to prove himself the heir to the title and estates. It is a great blow to his uncle, for it comes just when he had made up his mind to ask Marion Elisdon to be his wife. Misfortunes never come singly, for on the very evening that he receives the news that he has lost fortune, title, and estates, he goes with a heavy heart to see Marion, hoping at least for comfort and sympathy. She is out, and Mrs. Elisdon having heard the news from her husband, thinks it a good opportunity of stopping further "philandering" between Marion and the quondam Sir John. It is characteristic of Mrs. Elisdon, that, though she has not heard from himself of his loss, she at once addresses him as *Mr. Hope*.

Sir John smiles, grimly: "Thank you, Mrs. Elisdon," he says, with extreme urbanity. "It is gratifying, when one has gained or lost a title, to be addressed by one's new one so soon."

"I should think so, Mr. Hope, it is always best to call people, as well as things, by their right names; and the sooner the better, I say," replies Mrs. Elisdon, not in the least disturbed by Colonel Hope's irony.

"By-the-by, Mr. Hope, I think it only my duty," she continues, "to warn you that you don't understand Marion Elisdon—let me tell you she will fool upon you to the top of your bent, and—then laugh at you."

His face darkens, but he is loyal to friendship, at least.

"Miss Elisdon is a most charming lady," he says, with a bow, "and has her sex's undoubted prerogative of amusing herself at the expense of

ours if it so pleases her. I am the last man who would gainsay her. But among her many admirers I presume she favours one?"

Mrs. Elisdon has not the faintest idea from the lightness with which he speaks of how heavily his heart is beating, nor how anxiously he awaits her answer.

"Oh, yes, of course," she says, not really from *mal prepense*, but because she does not trouble herself to think of what she is saying.

"Young, rich, and handsome, no doubt?" he queries, with a grating laugh.

"Well, really," replies Mrs. Elisdon, "I can't say which of them it is. Marion flirts with so many (a polite fiction on Mrs. Elisdon's part). But naturally she admires—Oh, Marion! Why, I thought you had gone to the Percivals," exclaims her step-mother in surprise, as Marion makes her appearance through the garden gate.

"No; I turned back. Sir John (going towards him with outstretched hands), I am *so* sorry. It is very, *very* hard for you, and—and words are so—useless to help, to—"

"Miss Marion, your sympathy is very precious to me," says the Colonel brokenly; "your friendship more so, if I may still claim so much."

"Indeed you may, Sir John," she says earnestly.

"Nay, you must not call me Sir John now," he says with a smile.

"But I must, and I will," she replies. "I couldn't call you anything else if I tried."

"Not if it pains me?"

"Oh, Sir John, forgive me!"

At this he laughs outright.

"Miss Marion, you are Irish—incurrigibly Irish," he says.

"Please don't. I am English—utterly English. I wouldn't be anything else for the world, not even—"

"Not even what?" he asks insinuatingly.

"Never mind, Sir John; but please do not call me Irish again."

"Surely you understand that it was in its old sense of beautiful inconsistency that I meant it?" he says earnestly. "I haven't offended ye, have I?"

"Dreadfully. But, Sir John, you have told me nothing about yourself yet."

"Do you really care—to know? Come and sit beside me while I tell ye the whole history, then," he says wistfully.

She comes obediently, and gently slips her hand into his.

"God bless ye," he whispers hoarsely, pressing her hand tightly. Then he sits looking at her without speaking a word, and as he looks his dark eyes fill, for it comes upon him overwhelmingly what he has lost—wealth, estates, name, and—*love!* A sudden sob escapes his lips.

"Sir John—dear Sir John," she whisper tremulously, "take heart, don't let it cast you down so. If God for some wise purpose has taken away estates and name, he has yet left you the more precious gifts of health and—friends."

Her tender words, her gentle touch, are as the very balm of healing to his wounded spirit, but he dare not trust himself to speak for fear he should tell her how dearly, how passionately he loves her. Yet, if he knew it, Marion Elisdon, like Ruth of old, is ready, for the love she bears him, to follow

him to the ends of the earth—ay, even were he an outcast and a beggar. But he does not know.

"Marion, Marion," calls Mrs. Elisdon just then.

"Go, child, it is better so," he says gently.

"But you know I sympathize with you, Sir John, don't you?" she says wistfully.

"I think I do—my—"

"Marion," again calls her step-mother.

"Yes, mamma," says Marion, going to her.

"Did you think to order the sweep?"

"The sweep? Oh, dear, I am sorry, but I quite forgot to do so," says Marion penitently.

"Of course you did," says Mrs. Elisdon. "I should like to know what you ever remember except philandering nonsense?" Then noticing her flushed face, she exclaims angrily, "My goodness, Marion, that Mr. Hope has never had the impudence to propose to you, has he? Well I never, and he with only a hundred a year, too!"

"Mrs. Elisdon, how—how can you?" says Marion, hot tears of mortification in her eyes. "He—will hear you," glancing round fearfully.

But Colonel Hope is gone. Marion thinks he went before her step-mother's last speech, but in truth he heard every word of it, and went because he did so.

"No," muses the Colonel, "I must give up all thoughts of such a thing. It is hard, ay, harder even than I thought. But if there were no other fellow in the way it would be madness, the most ultra selfishness, to ask her, now."

And so he makes a mighty resolution not to see her again until he has quite got over it; and stays away a month. At the end of which time, having obtained a secretaryship he has been trying for, he thinks he must go, just to tell her.

Marion has on her prettiest dress when he arrives, which he taking note of, thinks saysagely; "She expects that other fellow, I suppose." She looks so pleased to see him, however, and tears are actually in her eyes when he tells her of his appointment, with the large salary of two hundred a year attached to it.

"Quite a rich man, shall I not be, Miss Elisdon?" he says ironically.

"I don't like to hear you speak so cynically, Sir John," she says.

"Three hundred a year, with my private fortune," he goes on. "What a temptation to—to—some lovely woman to marry me. Don't you think so?"

"She must be lovely, I suppose?" she asks irrelevantly.

"Oh, decidedly. With such advantages as I have to offer I expect nothing less than beauty in return."

"Men are foolish," she says bitterly.

"In what way?" he inquires.

"If unworldly, they marry a woman simply because she is pretty. If worldly-wise, they will often crush out their best and holiest feelings for the woman they really love—and who loves them in return—for the sake of some girl with money, or whose position in the social scale will raise their own."

"Hum, you make me feel proud of my sex, Miss Elisdon."

"And yet," she goes on, musingly, "the secret of all true marriage is—sympathy as—much as love."

"I agree with you," he says earnestly. "A

wife should be her husband's other self—as like himself as possible in thought and feeling, how else can she sympathize with, or understand him? Yet should she have a thorough individuality of her own, for otherwise she will only be his echo," he adds.

"How wise you have grown, Sir John," she says mockingly.

"Have I?"

"I think so."

"Not *worldly-wise*," with a sigh, "according to your definition."

"No? Now the perfect creature you have been depicting needs but one grace more to make her perfect indeed."

"And that?" he says, lifting his eyebrows interrogatively.

"Is the old-fashioned scripture grace of reverence for her husband."

"Ah!" another sigh, as he thinks how little likely it is that she would reverence him—but perhaps she does that other fellow? It is this thought that makes him say bitterly—

"Reverence, that is the point in which you would fail, Miss Elisdon, I can't imagine you reverencing any man?" Yet there is an odd questioning in his voice as if he would gladly be convinced to the contrary.

"Can't you?" says Marion. "Perhaps you are right."

But his quick ear detects the deep undertone of pain.

"Or rather," he continues lightly, to hide his own feeling, "I should have added unless he were some demigod of splendid stature, with neatly trimmed whiskers and beard, like—"

"Like whom?" she asks defiantly.

He pauses, then continues—

"Oh—Adonis—or Apollo—perhaps—"

Precisely. Let it be Apollo. I—I prefer—Apollo."

"Do you? Who is Apollo?"

She laughs constrainedly.

"Tell me who he is and I'll go," he says bitterly. "I can't and won't share with any man."

"I—I don't understand you?"

"You do."

"I do not," passionately. "It is all nonsense—there is no Apollo."

"Marion," coming close to her, "look at me. Pray look at me."

But she persistently keeps her face averted from him.

"Do, dear?" he pleads, his voice trembling with intense emotion.

Then she lifts her eyes to his—the next instant she is clasped in his arms and their lips have met.

"So there really is no Apollo, after all," he says presently.

"Yes—I think there is," smiling and blushing.

"What!" a light breaking in upon him. "An old, bald-headed fellow like me?"

Her eyes are beaming and her voice trembling with happiness as she answers softly yet archly—

"Yes, sir."

THE TRIO.

PART I.

I.

THREE striplings played in a leafy bower
In the early days of spring;
And the trees and plants with many a flow'r
Were mantled, whilst each pleasant hour
Passed on a tireless wing.

II.

Three angels peered from their large bright eyes
Wee angels amongst the blue,
Whose circles seemed to harmonize
With the arching canopy of the skies
And vie with its liquid hue.

III.

And three pairs of lips like cherries mure
That hang tempting from the bough;
Three hearts that beat with yearnings pure
For fame and name that should endure
Beyond the fleeting Now!

IV.

Three little heads arrayed with hair
That hangs in ringlets light;
Six little feet that everywhere,
Wandered thro' gardens fresh and fair
From morning until night.

V.

Only three types they live and move,
A lovelier land they trod,
Guarded they dwelt in a greener grove,
And learned more beautiful scenes to love
From the picture book of God.

VI.

"I," said the eldest, "long to be
A sailor on the deep,
To visit every wandering sea,
For there are voices calling me—
Voices that will not sleep."

VII.

And the second read of camp and forts,
And Glory's long death roll,
And yearned for battle in his sports,
And ever in his passing thoughts
On Glory fed his soul.

VIII.

But the youngest dwelt on another sphere,
And saw with his dreamy eyes
Strange forms which often would appear,
Whilst borne upon his ravished ear
Came wildest symphonies.

IX.

He loved in solitude to dwell
And read the trees and flow'rs;
His fancies peopled hill and dell,
By gurgling stream or bracken swell
He dreamed away the hours.

PART II.

I.

THE eldest on the heaving deep
Followed his wild career,
O'er trembling seas that cannot sleep,
Impelled by winds which madly sweep,
Yet ignorant of fear.

II.

New prospects open to his smile,
New lands by man untrod,
Till he reached at last the western isles
Where the virtuous soul existence wiles
In the pleasure lands of God;

III.

Now as beside their garden streams
That mystic voice he hears,
Which bids him onward in his dreams,
And haunts him in the noonday's beams
And never disappears.

IV.

The second sought the field of Mars
Where victory twines her wreath,
And Glory with triumphal cars,
For striving throngs the way unbars
To the clammy vaults of Death.

V.

There martyr at the final goal
To the dreams he loved before,
When in the chambers of his soul,
He heard the mighty peans roll
From the organ pipes of War.

VI.

The last has passed his life in dreams
Alone in the silent woods,
Companion to the running streams
That flashed beneath the noontide's beams
Thro' their misty solitudes.

VII.

He saw the green veil of the spring
Spread out upon the trees,
The summer with its bordered wing,
And heard the winds which murmuring
Wake autumn's harmonies.

VIII.

From that lone grove a voice arose
And creation bowed to hear
The tremulous strains as they breathed repose,
A tide of harmony which flows
Thro' man from a higher sphere.

IX.

The dreamer and singer is dead,
But his notes as they lightly rang
For ever resound thro' the trees o'erhead,
And the streams and flow'r's in his footsteps spread,
Retain the words he sang.

B.

FOUND DROWNED,

BY RITSON STEWART.

CHAPTER XL.

DOLLY'S CLEVERNESS.

MATTHEW had taken his arrest quietly, only seeming distressed at having to leave the sick child. He did not appear to make any effort to understand his position, or what he was accused of. He put down the trouble and annoyance to which he was now subjected to the ill offices of Mary, who had been an "undutiful" girl for a long time; so he said. He was, or seemed to be, slow in comprehending questions put to him; and there might be some cunning in his reticence on the subject of his doings on the eventful afternoon. He told the same tale to every one who spoke to him on the subject, almost in the same words. He told it to the police when they went to the cottage; he told it to old Doctor Tyson, who went to visit him afterwards. He did not seem to understand when spoken to concerning his defence, and he showed very little interest—certainly no anxiety—about preliminary proceedings.

"If Mary said it, you mustn't believe it. Mary's an undutiful girl to me."

That was the substance of his explanation. He would wander on then to his original statement—

"I went up to the Colonel's, an' I asked for the Missis," &c. &c., ending as before; "and when I got home little Dolly was in bed alone, and all of a fever."

When Doctor Tyson, who took a kindly interest in his position, and wished to discover his state of mind, asked if he had any reply to make to his granddaughter's statement that he had pushed John Edge into the river, he answered—

"If it's what Mary says, I've nought to do with it; she's an undutiful girl to me, and I've nought to do with her foolish chatter."

The only anxiety he showed was about Dolly's health and the possibility of her coming to see him. Sometimes, in speaking of her, he broke into a foolish little laugh of pleasure.

"She's a clever child; there's not many so clever as my Dolly."

When at last he was brought up on remand—John Edge still lying unconscious, and giving little hope of recovery—it eeked out, in the mysterious way in which these things do reach the public, that the police were much disappointed in the strength of the evidence they could bring forward.

There would be Dr. Tyson's evidence of the old injury, and of the present mental condition of the accused, making homicidal mania a probable thing; there would be my evidence—which, however, practically amounted to nothing; and Mary's evidence, which, so far, had been nearly as insufficient as mine, and which—people began to suspect—was, after all, the whole of what she had to say. At first they had believed that she was still holding back something out of a natural

shrinking from being the one to bring convincing evidence against her grandfather.

There was now among the dalesmen a general conviction of Matthew's guilt, and an equally general fear that it could not be brought home to him. Suspicions were plentiful; proof there was none. One good solid witness who had seen something would be worth half a dozen vague accusers. No one at that moment suspected where this valuable witness was to come from.

When old Matthew was put into the dock he bore the same aspect of comparative indifference, tinged occasionally by a look of perplexity, which had characterized him since his arrest. He was sullen when spoken to, and hardly seemed to notice when his granddaughter appeared, as the second witness against him; I having been the first. Her evidence proved to be very slight, and to reveal little more than her first wild accusation. She believed he had done the deed, but she had not seen him do it, nor any other like it. She related about her grandfather's peculiar ways, his frequent absences and wanderings on the margin of the stream, and her own suspicions concerning him. Certain coincidences of time which she pointed out were remarkable enough, but they required corroborative evidence of a more distinct sort to give them value: standing alone they proved nothing. She had not even seen her father when John Edge suddenly sprang—or seemed to spring—from his position on the bridge; she had only guessed that he was there. The strongest point which she could bring forward referred to the chalk marks behind the door. These her grandfather had forbidden her to remove, showing great anger when she attempted to do so. But even concerning these she could only state that he had certainly put the two first crosses as chronicles of the two first deaths; because he had said that he was marking them for that purpose; she had no proof that those added afterwards had the same meaning, because he had soon ceased to speak to her on the subject. The fifth cross was indeed to her own knowledge added on the night of the drowning of the servant girl, and before she or any one else had any means of knowing what had happened. This it was which had been to her the convincing proof of what she had long suspected. Supplemented by my evidence, it stood out as a remarkable fact, but after all it proved nothing.

Matthew had listened without sign of interest so far. It was all the chatter of an undutiful girl, and "nought to him." When, however, Dolly was brought forward to give evidence concerning the time of his return home his attitude changed. He looked at her with pleasure and interest, without anxiety; rather with an expectant pride, as if he felt sure that she would show off her "cleverness" to these people assembled to listen to her.

Dolly proved a highly intelligent and competent witness. She did not, perhaps, understand the nature of an oath, but she was quite sure where she would go to if she told a lie, and she showed a readiness to quote hymns on the subject, as for example:—

"Satan is glad
When I am bad,
And hopes that I
With him shall lie
In fire and chains
And dreadful pains,"

which she gabbled out with the speed of a steam engine, proving thereby how well she had been instructed, how deeply dipped in that popular fountain of infant piety, "The Peep of Day."

Old Matthew chuckled at her fluency, and the child had to be repressed; but this was done very gently, lest she should be discouraged in giving important evidence.

She was asked about her grandfather's return on the eventful night.

"Mr. Smith was goned away," she replied, affably; "and grand-dad comded in and chalked up another kos on de door."

This statement, unexpected in its completeness, made a decided sensation in the audience; but old Matthew only smiled and tapped a gentle encouragement with his hands, as if he was afraid of the child being interrupted.

When asked if she knew what the crosses meant, she said that grand-dad "yited" them up when naughty people were drowned. Asked again if she had seen any one drowned, she said she had seen Davy Miller. She gave further particulars of this event.

"Dolly saw Davy go lean up against yailing and hang all over to ketch fish, and grand-dad went over the yoad; and Dolly went over too and peeped yound; and grand-dad give Davy one big push and said, 'Naughty Davy, go drown!'"

"No, no, Dolly, grand-dad didn't say that."

This correction, so convincing in its very limitation, came with all the force of an unintentional confession from the old man himself. The audience was amazed, and turned to look at him. He had been listening intently, with an eye full of eagerness and a head that nodded affirmation almost at every word. He was not anxious now, only quick to correct, watching the child with admiration and apparent unconsciousness of the presence of any one else, or the meaning of the whole transaction.

He was silenced at once, and Dolly was encouraged to go on; but she pouted at the interruption and was less fluent and affable than before. Urged to tell more of what she saw, she added at last—

"Davy fell in water, and skeamed, and grand-dad skeamed, and grand-dad saw Dolly peep and said, 'Dolly, you yun home;' and Dolly yunned and drowned one doll—two—three; then grand-dad said, 'Dolly drown no more.'"

In this summary of facts, times and places were perhaps a little mixed; but Dolly persisted in the important statement that she had seen the old old man push the boy into the river.

"She has tried to tell me this many a time," Mary said to me afterwards in a voice broken by sobs, "but I never would let her go on. I hoped the child was making it all up, for she does not always speak the truth."

It was a singular thing that after this evidence given by Dolly the old man abandoned his defence, and made a complete confession with what may almost be called—considering the terrible nature of the affair—a cheerful alacrity.

It had simply occurred to him, when he saw Timothy Wake reeling across the fields towards the bridge, that it would be nice to push him into the river, and he had proceeded to put this idea into practice. The pleasure of the pastime grew with its exercise, and when the number of his

victims had mounted to two, he proceeded to chronicle them on the door, hoping in time to make up a long list. He soon realized, however, that if his neighbours suspected his new diversion they would interfere with it, so that he began to exercise greater caution and secrecy in his proceedings. He did not appear to have felt any malice towards his victims, or to have taken pleasure in their sufferings, and the kindness he had shown to their relatives seemed to have been sincere and part of his old habit of neighbourly help, which persisted contemporaneously with the newly developed homicidal instinct. After he had pushed people into the river he wanted them to drown, so he said, lest they should tell of him; otherwise he would not have minded their getting out. The young man, the tourist, had given him the most trouble, and he was afraid at one moment that this victim was going to get to land again; but he had been carried further on afterwards, and Matthew had seen nothing more of him, though he had walked down the river to the lake to look, until his body was found afterwards.

At first he had welcomed Dolly into his partial confidence with pleasure, as a willing and intelligent accomplice; but afterwards he found that she was likely to get him into trouble, so he had kept her out of the way, and had discouraged her chatter on the subject. Mary he had always perceived to be the chief obstacle in the regular pursuit of his pastime. She had laid herself out to thwart him in every way; but it had apparently never occurred to him to get rid of her interference by making her one of his victims: the instinct of family affection remained too strong in his nature for that. The accident with Dolly had occurred by mistake. Finding her suddenly beside him, he had given her instinctively the usual push, and had recognized her just too late. At one time he had intended to add me to his victims, but he had soon given me up as too wary and suspicious. He had nothing to say against John Edge, who was a nice enough young man, though Mary was foolishly fond of him, but he had felt certain he must be "one of them" sooner or later, because he was always putting himself in the way of it. Mary seemed to know, too, and was always on the watch and running out to meet him. That last flood things had been against him, and no one had crossed at the right time. He was looking out for a chance as he came back from Colonel Race's, and so he stood away behind a tree when Farmer Wood passed by. He was glad to have done that as soon as he saw John Edge on the bridge; he crept up behind him, gave one sudden push, and it was done.

CHAPTER XL

CONCLUSION.

THIS was the substance of the old man's confession, which settled for ever the question of his guilt and the need of witnesses against him. The mystery of Meadow Bridge was solved at last, and there was no room left to wonder at the number of the tragic deaths that had taken place there. If Mary had not spoken out her vague suspicions, if Dolly had not peeped, the list might have gone

on increasing until accident betrayed the old man at his secret work of murder.

He had played at it like a game; he had gone on making his collection as a naturalist might have gone on adding to his number of specimens; and with as little sense of wickedness, or consciousness of moral depravity. Now the play was over, but he showed no anger at Dolly for having revealed it; his pleasure in her cleverness still prevailed. He went into the obscurity of a lunatic asylum with a little feeling of spite against Mary for her interference, and a good deal of pride in his own past achievements; otherwise the sentiments he expressed were, for the most part, exemplary.

The good dalesmen looked upon him with horror as a hardened and brutal murderer; but he had no knowledge of his moral depravity, and remained, to his own consciousness, the kindly and pleasant old man, whom all his neighbours had loved and trusted, and who had deserved their good opinion. He was never again set at liberty, but kept in close confinement as a dangerous lunatic. At first he showed a cunning desire to resume his late pastime of homicide, but he soon sank into helpless imbecility, which ended in death.

Meanwhile, Mary went about like one on whom the curse of heaven and the hatred of her fellow-beings must ever rest. She could not bear to visit her neighbours, or to let Dolly play with other children, lest some chance word should recall the horrors of the past, and sound like a reproach to them for the sins of their grandfather.

The first circumstance which roused her to anything like hope was the recovery—slow indeed and very fitful in its progress—of John Edge.

When he returned to feeble consciousness he was ignorant of all that had happened to him, and the doctor forbade him to be told of it. His sister had a baby ill at that time, and therefore (in the re-action of pity and sympathy which she, in common with others, was beginning to feel for Mary after the first general instinct of horror and withdrawal) she permitted the poor girl to come to her cottage and help her to nurse the injured man, Mrs. Timson taking charge of Dolly meanwhile.

It was a wonder to John Edge to find—in the mysterious illness which had come upon him—that Mary was there in his sister's house, waiting upon him with the utmost tenderness, meekness, and humility.

"We are friends again, it seems, Mary; but why?" So he would say to her, and she would answer,

"No, not friends, John, only I will wait on you and work for you as long as you will let me, and when you send me away I will go, without a word."

This perplexed him, for why should he send her away?—but she would give him no explanation then. He wasn't fit to talk, she said, but he should do whatever he liked when he was strong enough.

At last, when it became necessary to tell him all, she begged the doctor that the story might come from her lips only; and with many sobs she whispered it to him, begging forgiveness for her father's sins and her own silence.

"It's only your forgiveness I want, John, not your love any more," so she said; while he listened to her in a silence she did not know how to

interpret, holding her hand all the time with a painful grasp, but not moving or seeking to look into her averted face; "for it isn't fit that you or any one else should have more to do with me now. We've only been waiting, Dolly and me, till you got better, to go away from here and from folk who must hate our very name. We've friends in Canada as I've written to, to say we're coming; only I couldn't bear, John, to go before I'd heard you say you forgave me. I know you'll say it, because you've always been so good and kind, John, too good a man for me to marry—even before. And now, if you'll only say it, I'll go without another word; except just this: God bless you and make up to you for all the wrong I've done you even while I've been loving you so much."

He was silent a moment, and she wondered, with a spasm of misery, if he were going to refuse her request. He was lying back on the sofa in his sister's room, and his whole attitude was ominously still. After a moment, in which she did not venture to look at him, he raised himself slowly and with some effort to a sitting posture; then he dropped her hand to clasp her suddenly and painfully in his arms.

"Mary," he said, speaking with difficulty and distress, "let us be married—very soon—then you will never talk like this again."

* * * * *

They were married as soon as John was well enough to walk to church, and they went to Canada afterwards; Scardale had too many painful associations to make a happy home for the young wife.

Her husband was delicate for several years after his "accident," but Mary worked for him almost like a man, and nursed him at the same time like the tenderest woman, till at last he got back his old strength and full vigour.

Dolly went also to Canada, where she thrived exceedingly and improved much. Her sister's babies gradually roused the latent tenderness of her nature, so that no one who sees her tossing them in her arms to-day would believe that she ever treated even her dolls with unkindness.

The tragedy of Meadow Bridge has become a mere tradition in Scardale, and a long lapse of years without accident has wiped the stigma of misfortune from the place.

THE END.

—•—

A TRINITY OF WAYS.

FAR from the fashion and folly and flare,
Far from the whirl of this Vanity Fair,
In a bosky dell, where a purling rill
Lazily turned a grey old mill,
Where bees drowsed by with burdens sweet,
With the clover-balls kissing her tiny feet,
Sat my dainty Jean,
The quaint little Jean,
In a plain grey dress and a Quakeress cap,
With rosy-red apples piled deep in her lap,
And with lips as red, with eyes demure,
With a spirit so blithe and a heart so pure,
There I met my queen,
My bonny, my Jean.

Weary was I of the folly and flare,
Choked with the dust of the world's thoroughfare;
And I wandered on by the purling rill,
Till I came to this grey old miller's mill;
And when I saw that vision sweet
Mid the clover-balls kissing the tiny feet,

Saw the dainty Jean,
The quaint little Jean,

The nymph of the wood and the stream and the
air,

The fairest of all God's handiwork there,
I stopped to ask—"Whither does my path
tend?"

"O the path goes on no farther, friend,"
Said my new-found queen,
My bonny, my Jean.

I accepted the omen, nor farther strayed
From the grey old mill in the drowsy glade.
I talked with the miller and watched the bees,
I shook the apples from fruit-bowed trees;
And many an hour with joy replete
Did I lie where the clover-balls kissed her feet,

Near the dainty Jean,
The quaint little Jean,

Till at last love rose to a passionate plea.

"O Jeannie, the path of my love leads to thee!
There is naught beyond. Will you bid it stay?"

And she quaintly, daintily answered "Yea."
Oh, my darling, my queen!
My bonny bright Jean!

Merrily rung the marriage-bell
Deep in the heart of that bosky dell,
When the grey old mill had a day of rest,
And the grey old miller donned his best;
When the purling rill laughed loud with glee,
And the clover-balls trembled with ecstasy.

When my dainty Jean,
My quaint little Jean,

Became my new world far from the flare
Of the fashion and folly of Vanity Fair.
And I ever rejoice that my life path ends
With the quaint little Jean and her Quaker friends,
With my dainty Jean,
My bonny wife Jean.

OSCAR PARK.

GHOSTS, BORES, AND PHILOSOPHERS.

BY N. ROBERTSON.

IN these days, when a large number of the civilized human race wander round the world, and alas! in and out of other people's houses, in a chronic state of boredom, a misery to themselves and a terror to others, the man who discovers or invents a new object of interest is a universal benefactor. I do not know who brought ghosts into fashion lately, and even invested them with scientific interest, but that man, if he exists, deserves, for social and philosophical reasons, our profoundest gratitude.

One of my friends tells me, that when attacked by a bore, he resolutely sacrifices a portion of his time (a few hours generally suffices) to inspire the suffering individual with an interest either in the Charity Organization Society, the Society for Psychical Research, or the Statistical Society, according as his phrenological development shows a bent towards benevolence, science (shall I say?),

or mathematics. And the remedies are infallible; the inoculated bore flies off at a tangent, and if he comes back, it is as a transfigured glorified bore; an active instead of a passive bore. And let me inform the few of my readers who have had no experience of bores, or who do not allow themselves to be bored, that the passive unoccupied kind is much the most painful and lingering.

But my subject is rather ghosts than bores, though the two questions touch each other nearly. For it must be evident to any person who has spent time in the pursuit or observation of ghosts, that, if they are disembodied spirits at all, they must be the spirits of persons who were a great trial to their friends and relations—bores in fact. There is a tendency to low spirits about them (this is not a pun, as a spiritualist might think); they have almost always something on their minds; they have a diseased inclination to cling to people who do not wish for their society, and to remain in places where they have no earthly business. They are troubled by fixed ideas; they repeat some trivial and perfectly useless action in a maddening way.

For example, who does not know the troublesome person who will not let the fire alone? I am acquainted (distantly, I must own) with an old lady who has been disembodied for a hundred years or more, and who comes back to this earth apparently for no purpose but to poke one particular fire in one particular room. Whenever she is seen, she is attending to this fire, generally on her knees on the hearthrug. Who shall say that this is not a just retribution? None of us but have suffered from the too great devotion of some bore to the poker. It is a little severe perhaps, but just, at bottom.

Then the ghosts who throw stones and break crockery, and knock things round generally. Are they not the spirits of bored little boys, who in life would not love their book, and now are always out of school? Such of us as do not love little boys, or approve of their tricks and their manners, might be vindictively pleased to think so. And the number of stone-throwing ghosts is a support to this theory; little boys are so painfully numerous, and statistics inform us that they are difficult to rear. It is awful to reflect what a large number of stone-throwing boys perish in London annually; only a shade less terrible than to remember what a large number remain.

I should like to give a few hints to those persons who, without being bores, or even bored, feel themselves capable of an interest in ghosts, as to how to set out on a ghost hunt.

It is necessary, first, to overcome a little false shame, so as to be able courageously to mention one's pre-occupation to one's friends, and to strangers at dinner-tables, and even in trains and omnibuses. This requires some courage, as every other person looks on the inquirer as a madman, and either leaves his side hurriedly, or takes humiliating precautions. Some even instantly assume airs of smiling superiority, which are painful to bear.

But the effort will find its reward as all efforts do. The other half of the world has a story to tell, and is delighted to tell it. Your interlocutor will not have seen a ghost himself, probably, but his aunt or his grandmother, or a nameless friend will have done so. It is possible to get at names

and dates, but this is rare. Then the next point is to arrange an interview with the ghost, which is often a matter of difficulty, and involves a large amount of coaxing, letter-writing, manœuvring, and general efforts to "come round" the ghost's happy possessor, who has mostly a strong objection to publicity, and a stronger objection still to admit a stranger into his home circle.

This difficulty is, of course, lessened when the ghost has a fancy for any particular date. One has the opportunity to insinuate oneself into the confidence of the haunted family before the time fixed for the ghost's appearance. And let me here mention that a ghost chase is the only chase in which disappointment is as satisfactory as success. No one who has not vainly watched for a ghost can appreciate the sense of relief, the pride in his own courage, the approving warmth of heart which follows duty done, which take possession of the hunter, after one of his frequent failures.

A great deal of preparatory reading is also necessary; or an old, threadbare, worn-out ghost, who has long ago subsided, may be palmed off upon the inquirer, and he may be sent off on a wild-goose chase, to a castle in Scotland, perhaps, after a long since extinguished spirit. Very few people are aware, I think, what a large amount of ghost literature we English possess. Most persons content themselves with occasional crumbs in magazines and newspapers, when, if they only knew it, there are libraries in London where they might feast and revel and gorge themselves.

It is well, also, for an intending ghost-hunter to have a smattering both of law and science.

The former is necessary that he may at least appear to be able to weigh evidence, and the latter that he may be able to crush any opponent who suggests a natural cause for his phenomena. A knowledge of electricity is especially useful, as electricity is the scape-goat of many innocent folk, who immediately ascribe to it any effect of which they cannot discover the cause. So let all ghost-seekers and ghost-lovers learn to wield common scientific terms with fluency and effect.

To return to the ghosts themselves, however. It is curious what a number of them come back to this world to perform thoroughly inconsequential and trivial actions, which even the above theory of expiation does not explain. What can that ghost have done in life, for example, who—But here is the little story from the beginning.

On the outskirts of a manufacturing town in Central England there stood a house which was once surrounded by a large park. Little by little, however, the advancing streets devoured the park. Only a large garden surrounding the house remained. The house, too, had fallen from its high estate, and was used as a boarding-school for girls. The principal, Mrs. Collins, was aided by her daughters, and at the time of this strange occurrence, her adopted son, a young man in training for missionary work, was staying in the house also.

The family were well known in the town, and highly respected.

The house was large, square, and common-place looking. From the hall-door a broad flight of steps led down to a gravel drive. In front of the house was a lawn, upon which stood one magnificent cedar.

One very hot summer day the whole household were gathered about the open house-door. Some of the pupils were playing on the lawn and some in the hall; at the top of the steps, but a little back in the shade, stood Miss Collins and Clement Laws, the adopted son. Mrs. Collins herself stood on the drive. Lawn, and drive, and steps were in the full blaze of the early afternoon sunshine.

Among Mrs. Collins' pupils was a delicate West Indian girl, about eighteen years old. This girl stood at the top of the steps preparing to descend into the garden, when Mrs. Collins, seeing that she had no covering on her shoulders, called to her to go back for a shawl. Nearly everybody present was consequently looking at the girl, when she was seen to be lifted two or three feet from the ground, in a sort of sitting posture, and carried down the steps, across the lawn to the cedar tree, under which she was evidently dropped. I say evidently, because it looked as if whatever had supported her had been suddenly withdrawn. Of course the object of this disagreeable attention immediately fainted, and it was a long time before she could be recovered. When at last she did so, she explained that she had felt herself lifted by a man, whose arms, body, and even the cloth of whose coat she felt but could not see. One arm had been passed round her waist and the other under her knees; she felt herself drawn back till she rested against the breast of the invisible being, and then she was carried, as indeed a dozen persons present had seen, across the grass to the cedar, where the ghostly arms were suddenly withdrawn, and she fell fainting.

I am very sorry to say that this story has no sequel; it was never discovered who the ghost was, or the reason of his extraordinary performance. No one could ever guess why he had singled out the West Indian girl from the other pupils; nothing happened to her in consequence, except that she left the school.

It may be mentioned that the house had long had a reputation for being haunted; that the children and servants had complained of footsteps and noises, and that the latter were in the habit of leaving suddenly and without giving reasons, to their mistress's great annoyance. Of course, after the above occurrence the reports in the town increased tenfold, and Mrs. Collins was obliged to leave the house. It was not adapted for a school.

Now what can have been this ghost's motives? Up to the time of this event he had confined himself to producing noises; and was not in the habit of lifting young women. Otherwise I should have suggested that in life he had perhaps, under circumstances of great cruelty, refused to carry a lady down those steps. Or perhaps he had carried too many young ladies down them? The house had never been either a mad-house or an hospital, or of course the action, as that of a deceased and enthusiastic doctor or keeper, would be explicable.

Another most interesting ghost is the monstrous or formless one; a ghost who has no definite shape, and is neither beast nor human. I have heard a blood-curdling story of a ghost who appears, or did appear, in the shrubbery of a great house in Hampshire. A large, indistinct, flabby mass would be seen rolling on the path, in the twilight or darkness, with nothing clearly visible

but two flaming eyes. This apparition was a great trial to courting grooms and housemaids, whom it seemed to have a particular desire to frighten.

A propos of these indistinct animal-like appearances, a friend of mine told me the following tale, which he calls "The Apparition in the Cells":—

"When I was a boy at school," he said, "I had some playfellows named Brown, whose father held a position about the County Court at X—, which enabled him to go in and out of it at pleasure. The County Hall was a very large building, containing two great courts of justice, committee rooms, justice rooms, a large ballroom, and, as it used to appear to me, mysterious and endless staircases and galleries. Sometimes on Saturday afternoons the young Browns and myself would get permission to play there. No place could be imagined more suited for 'I spy' and 'Hide and seek.' The empty rooms were full of echoes, which we delighted in arousing; we climbed the pillars into the galleries; we hid in the dock and jury and witness boxes; we sat in the seats of the judges and held mock trials; in fact we revelled there, and filled the doleful place with shouts and laughter and the echoes of scampering footsteps. Our favourite playroom was the Criminal Court; there were more nooks and corners in it than in the other Court, besides which a fascinating little door led from the dock to the under regions—the cells where prisoners were confined while awaiting trial. This door to the cells was generally locked; therefore, when by chance we found it open, we particularly rejoiced to carry our riot into those sad little chambers. Here it would be easy to moralize. One day, however, we had an experience that put an end to our amusements there. We never played in the hall again. In order to be clear I must explain that when anyone stood on the steps leading from the dock he could see straight down the passage, on each side of which were the cells. There were four doors on the right hand and four on the left. How the passage and cells were lighted, I do not at this distance of time remember, but we had light enough always to distinguish one of us from the others. There was another entrance to the passage from the courtyard, by a door close to the foot of the stairs, but no other way out, and of course no way out of the cells themselves.

"We children were in the habit of calling one particular cell at the end of the passage the 'condemned' cell. This was ungrammatical, and I do not know why we did it; I think perhaps we had heard that prisoners condemned to death were confined there. If we did know this, no sentimental emotions prevented our using it for a hiding-place, or the little girls of the family from playing 'house' in it.

"One Saturday we had, to our great joy, found the door to the cells open. We organized a game of 'I spy,' and the seekers waited in the dock, which was ordinarily selected for that purpose, as only the tallest of us could see over the panels. One of the Browns went to hide, and I was among the company in the dock. We heard at last the usual 'hulloa,' which seemed to come from the direction of the cells; so we went down on to the steps, and stood planning our campaign.

"Suddenly one of the girls exclaimed—

"Look there! What's that?"

"We looked, and saw at the foot of the stairs a large, dirtyish white body, apparently lying on the floor. It was shapeless, but rather long. As we turned our eyes on it, it seemed to rise slowly from the ground; it moved down the passage, and turned into the 'condemned' cell. The thing, whatever it may have been, did not appear to walk, but to drag itself along and disappear lingeringly round the door.

"The group of children stood panic-stricken and silent for a minute; then—

"Did you see it? What can it be?" we whispered to each other.

"Bessie, the eldest, was the first to recover herself.

"It is a sheep or a goat," she said boldly.

"You go and look, Tom" (to me).

"This was trying. I was the eldest boy!"

"I will go, if you will all come with me," I said.

"Oh, coward!" cried Bessie in a whisper. But even that did not move me.

At last, huddled together, we crept down, a step at a time, till we reached the bottom of the little flight of stairs. We set the door into the courtyard wide open to ensure ourselves an easy retreat, and then, hand in hand, we went down the passage, the little girls behind the boys. The door of the cell was half open, and we peered fearfully round it. The small oblong space was perfectly empty. The little girls, more alarmed than ever at this, took to their heels with shrieks, but I myself and Brown, thinking we might have been deceived as to the cell which the "thing" had entered, pushed open all the doors and examined the others. All were alike empty. At that we too ran away, and a clamorous body sought "papa," and begged for explanations. The explanations we did not get; we were severely reprimed all round, and told that we should never play in the cells again. To which we replied with unanimity and firmness that we did not want. But, with the astuteness of children, we had noticed that "papa" had covered gravity and confusion with pretended anger, and we were not surprised to hear afterwards that we were not the first or the only persons who had been alarmed by the "apparition in the cells." Also it came to our ears, in spite of the precautions of our elders, that a man had once hanged himself in the "condemned" cell. However, the thing, whatever it was, did not in the least resemble a man, even a recumbent one. It did not creep or crawl; it dragged like a serpent."

The two stories I have related are only specimens of many which have been related to me as a known amateur of ghosts.

Here it would be as well to warn all readers against making the rash generalization that all ghost-hunters have been bores. There are many splendid exceptions. The revived interest, and perhaps belief, in ghosts is a curious feature of our matter-of-fact age. It is the beginning of a rebellion against those philosophers who, barred into their little personality by five limited senses, and so insignificant that they are lost on a little atom of revolving matter, itself lost in a limitless universe, practically claim omniscience, and crush their humbler fellow-prisoners with a magnificent "What you tell me is impossible;" or "It is against the laws of nature, which I have at my

fingers ends;" or even "Nothing would induce me to believe it."

Yes. With the last Baconian utterance did a great scientist once close a discussion; he therewith reduced his adversaries to confounded silence. For what could they reply to such an argument?

To be sure, the philosopher had been much badgered, and was in a pet.

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER II.

LOOKING BACK.

THE venetian blinds were down, jealously guarding privacy, but a brilliant light came from between the laths, throwing out cheery scintillations into the outer darkness of the quiet Close. The piano was having no easy time, it was Dick on the music-stool, it could be none other than he. Light-hearted, careless Dick! Dick was in clover, he was at his happiest trolling out "The Leather Bottel," *au Sanley*. What a mellow voice the fellow had, he talked about not caring so much for music, why Dick was the very fellow who should cultivate his talent. But surely Dick could not be so exuberant with that *mauvais garçon* there to criticize his performance. A footfall recalled Aylmer to himself, he must not be caught in *flagrante delicto*. He crossed the silent roadway, and stood a moment against the palisades in the shadow of the Lucy tower. Aylmer observed the pedestrian stop at the door of the quaint old house and ring the bell. The door opened, in the frame of golden light Aylmer recognized the object of Dick Devcnsey's antipathy, the young deputy organist. Aylmer was well assured that Dick's session of pleasure was over, the piano indeed came to a sudden halt and Aylmer strode on anathematizing an unconscious person in no measured manner. It was nothing to him this fellow appearing upon the scene, but he liked Dick, and he detested a fellow giving himself airs of superiority.

Aylmer's walk fell short of the clump of gorse, nor had his alterative the sedative result he hoped that it would have. His irresolution brought him past Lady Mary's house again, the light was still brilliant, but the piano was now more measured and correct, evidently not labouring under Dick's effervescence. Mr. Pulsford was giving some choice music no doubt. Aylmer did not linger this time but hurried on, and when he reached his room dropped into his chair glad to be under cover again. The wind was too raw and boisterous out of doors. But though the room looked cheerful after the buffeting he had had, he felt inexpressibly lonely. A bookshelf was at his elbow—"Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy" upon it—but he felt that a book now was scarcely a panacea for his ills. He could not concentrate his mind, it was too full

of the Close, the house and its occupants, in his mind's eye still vividly lingered the quaint bow window with its cheerful light. How familiar the old house was to him, it had an air of superiority, its appearance was that of a house tenanted by refined people. The old china mug on the little stand in the window, every morning filled with old-fashioned flowers from the grand old garden behind, was an association. He knew who gathered the flowers, whose fingers arranged them. He had a tenderness for the quaint figures on that ancient piece of china, the impossible flora and fauna of Eastern fancy were in accord with the romance depicted. The true lover never got near his mistress, there were obstacles in his way. Dolorous the lover looked under the huge-leaved tree; though the lady wore a gandy dress, she did not carry an arrogant expression, nor appear conscious of her charms and get up, or that she was aware that she was proper even to her hairpins. Was it studied reserve or maidenly delicacy that she did not seem to note the turmoil of her lover. He wished to speak and could not find words to express himself!

Aylmer felt this relic of a rococo age was a certain guide to the character of the house. There would be, as in other old world houses, quaint nick-nacks, faded Indian boxes marvellously veneered, Eastern curios a century old, furniture spindle shanked, without doubt a table or a hand-screen with a representative of George the Fourth's pavilion at Brighton. There would be some old portraits, women peering mournfully out of the gloom of age and varnish, a macaroni with his greyhound, standing cross-legged against a pillar. Aylmer fancied he was evolving all this, when in reality it had filtered through Dick Devensey. Dick had an observant eye; he could not help letting something slip of the Lares and Penates of this old house, whenever he dropped into his friend's room, and the conversation veered round to Lady Mary and her grand-niece.

Aylmer sat with the faintest jet of gas turned on. The gloom and the firelight accorded with his mood. He was only roused from his abstraction by his housekeeper bringing in his bitter ale.

"Am I to turn the gas on, sir?"

"Oh yes——" answered Tom, waking up. "Has anyone called?"

"No, sir."

"Everyone well," thought Tom, resignedly, but of course he did not give it expression. Some people are very dense when jokes are flying about.

When he was again alone he began to look back, as many of us will when we are a little out of sorts. Questioning himself mentally, had he not been a little rash commencing practice here in Tremenster. It was his native town. He felt he had not done so well as his sanguine mind had led him to believe he would. He had thrown up a good hospital appointment for the more precarious line of a country practitioner.

"Is there room for me in Tremenster?" he asked Desforges, coming across an old face in town. "I have been strongly urged to settle there."

"Room? I should say so; I should be glad of you in Tremenster. I would rather have you than a stranger, Aylmer," declared Desforges, generously; "we know you, and we can work with you. Devensey and I have no rest."

But Devensey did not express any satisfaction when Tom put in an appearance, in fact he scarcely concealed his irritation, and Mrs. Devensey was bitterly bland when Desforges, after welcoming the new comer with open arms, presented him much as they do people at Court when they get an appointment. She eyed Aylmer mistrustfully, and when afterwards it was their fortune to meet made it plain to him by a certain expression in her face that she pitied him and deplored the ignorance of the people who had given him such false hopes. There were medical men in Tremenster besides "Devensey and Desforges," if the firm was alone uphill. And Aylmer found the very people who had counselled him to make a settlement in the town his coolest friends. They acquainted him that they could not think of changing their medical advisers, almost too promptly to be agreeable. Nevertheless, he found patients or they found him, and sometimes he had plenty to do. Certain people discovered that the young doctor had a soft heart and an easily gained ear. It was only unfortunate for him in a monetary sense that he did not make his way among the great people. With them of course, it is a point of honour not to neglect the doctor's fee. Aylmer's patients had empty purses and long consciences, and so grist came to his mill very sparsely. There was nothing for it but to appear patient, abide by being overlooked, and wait hopefully. The cathedral dignitaries, the old families, part and parcel of the town, he was well aware were exclusive and conservative, shy of new faces and new manners. Dr. Devensey's father had founded his practice, Desforges was introduced by Devensey, moreover Desforges had been taken to because he was a cadet of a noble family.

"And am not I," muttered Aylmer to himself—"oh, no, I forget, I'm a nobody." He felt ground cut away from under his feet times and times. "Perhaps I am as good blood as any here," he would murmur to himself, and a dear voice would seem to echo from somewhere across the gulf—

"Tom, you will have to work for your living, for your bread, meat and clothing. You must not lose heart if you have a rough time of it. You will make mistakes, Tom, and regret making them. I have often thought, Tom, it could have been better had you never been born, but you must make the best you can of it!"

Whose voice had delivered this odd exordium? The few sentences seemed determined not to slip from his memory. It was the dear voice of him who later on in life followed the young wife who had never rallied after giving birth to her first child; she whose image had never been effaced from her lover's mind; she for whom he had bartered place and fortune.

"I might have become the baronet," had said Tom Aylmer's father to him one evening in the soft month of October, when the shadows were becoming sombre and fitful, "had I not considered the love of a true woman the greatest blessing in life, and worthy of all sacrifice. Well, Sir Aubrey had his revenge marrying—the young girl and her two boys have dispossessed us—hard lines is it not, Tom, after having been led in my young days to regard myself as the heir to Chesterton. You must not even dream of probabilities, Tom. I was assured, and I came on a quicksand. Still,

my boy, stay in England—do not lose your identity. Aylmer blood is as good as any in Britain, and there has been as much bad blood in the family as in any other too. Your godmother is the only one from whom you can expect anything; it would not be wise to place much dependence upon her, for she is a whimsical old cat. I have no business to say that either; had it not been for her your dear mother and I must have been in the surf, for I could never have brought myself to apply to Sir Aubrey after his usage of me. It was through her I obtained my post here. Every one thought Sir Aubrey had done right, excepting Molly Senescal. I should not have given you the name of Aubrey Thomas; it was she who insisted upon the name, and persuaded your dear mother. What a temper I was in, but she laughed at me, and then coaxed me, telling me it was folly to discontinue the line of Aubreys. There were no children to the old man when you came into the world, in fact he had not then succeeded in finding a young girl who would give way to the temptation of becoming Lady Aylmer. I knew it would come, once he had set his mind upon it. Be Tom, sink the Aubrey, you can afford to do so; forget what might have come to you had my choice met Sir Aubrey's views. Had I married the dull girl he singled out for me I might not have ended my days with the loving lad who listens to me so patiently. Though people take you to be so shy, awkward, and silent, I know you have brains, and I take comfort in the thought of having a good son. You're not a good conduct boy, you won't truckle Tom; I admire you for it, and still you are as clever as the precocious sneaks. Don't suffer people to patronise you, Tom; give them the cut if they attempt it; let the toadies have it all, as they love it. Be wary of friends; people drop you when you are under a cloud. I have been talking to Desforges; a good man, he will stand by you if you are ever in a difficulty, or want advice. Don't trust old Devensley; he is an old ass, dunghill-bred, and his wife is insufferable. I do detest those affected people, who can scarcely be understood. You know where my papers are, take care of them; they will establish you in certain contingencies. I forgive the old man for deluding me so shamefully. I don't bear any resentment to the little lads that have come, and you won't I know. Depend on yourself, Tom; marry the woman you love, if she'll take you; you're not a fellow to make a mistake there. I am an old cynic, my boy, but I have had my share of disappointments. I have been soured; perhaps I ought not to talk in such a strain to you, boy. I have had a degree of happiness here in my solitude. I have been as happy as I could expect to be without that dear companion, and I could be happy thinking that you would live here in this old house after me. It is an out-of-the-world place, and remote from the other Aymers. The people here leave you to your tub when they discover your disposition. Only I am all wrong; you will want to see the world; well, pursue your own course, and enjoy your young life. There will not be much money for you, barely enough to start you in a fair way. I am drowsy; I feel as if I should have a better night. Look in in the morning. I shall not hurry down. Good night, my dear boy."

When Tom Aylmer looked in the following morning there was no answering voice, his father's

brow was cold, the expression of his face placid, and the lines of care smoothed out. The haughty face wore a softer look. As Tom gazed tearfully on the thin visage, he could imagine the handsome man who had wooed and won, who had braved so much for the affection he had gained and returned. How brave and loyal he had been, even when dark days came and the malice of an unforgiving old man pursued him so uncompromisingly. Boy as he was, young Tom Aylmer was quite convinced that the world's judgment on his father, the cynic Aylmer, was all wrong. His father had not been quixotically foolish and headstrong, he had been honourable and true. He was on his father's side, and he felt that he would have acted as his father had done, even if it had lost him a patrimony. He would never make up to that cruel tyrannical old man.

Long before this confidence he had been aware that there had been dark and gruesome days of poverty, that his father had passed through trial, too proud to appeal for help, torn at the sight of the frail delicate girl fretting to see her husband harassed and unforgiven, seeing her grow weaker day by day, he had detected her taking comfort in her failing strength, in the fancy that when she was gone her husband would obey Sir Aubrey and be restored to favour. Those were dark days, when relief did come it was too late for her. She was past all hope when the morning papers announced the forthcoming marriage of Sir Aubrey Aylmer of Chesterton Park. Her husband was severe upon the negligent person who had suffered the newspaper to reach her hand. The sinking wife never alluded to the subject again, but with her last breath she turned to her husband with a word of little Tom, and beforetime it had been her pleasure to speak of her infant as little Aubrey.

What had been life to the widowed man after? Solitary indeed but for her boy. Even had it been in his power to propitiate his uncle by a second marriage, he would have looked upon it as sacrilege. He had seen it in her eyes, but had any one dared to hint such a thing to him! Once, hesitatingly, it was suggested to him that the child would be better under the influence of a tender woman. He closed the mouth of the adviser sternly.

"When he is out of the nurse's arms he will go without leading-strings!" Every evening the bereaved father took the child from its nurse and carried it into his own bedroom, there with him to contemplate an exquisite miniature of a lovely girl. It became a sacred office. In time the child began to comprehend and look for it. It was an unforgetting man's solace impressing upon a dawning intelligence the beauty of a closed life, the loss to both. The lonely man would endure no thought of separation, no one should come between him and her child.

The time came when the boy must receive some education; the father felt that contact with companions was preferable to home tuition. Happily there was a good foundation in Treminster. About this time the godmother wrote—she who had brought relief and with it volatile censure for the spirit that was too proud to go to her—she would have the boy go to Rugby at her charge. The father was nearly persuaded, but his repugnance to separation was too strong. "He is as manly as I wish him to be, and he is my only friend,"

was all the solitary man would vouchsafe in reply to the persistent letters of the godmother.

This fairy godmother might have taken offence. Aylmer judged so by her ominous silence afterwards. She never wrote again. Thus Tom became his father's *fidus Achates*, sharing his parent's walks and talks and moods. He had implicit faith in his father, never questioning a crotchet or an eccentricity. But this odd life had its effect upon the lad, it increased his diffidence with strangers. His angelic mother he had been taught to believe was far removed from all the women they saw and met. Women came to smile upon him with patronizing pity, he could gauge their thoughts, he was the little warped son of that odious man, the cathedral Diogenes. They passed him by, their rustling silks suggesting distance to the lad, and he noted that they sheltered their eyes under their sunshades when they met his father, or returned his bow with timid politeness. It was freezing civility on either side; the elder Aylmer would not forget his wife, go into society and let the dead past be buried.

"Your mother was not like one of them," the misogynist once muttered grimly and somewhat unjustly; "she never overdressed herself, she worshipped her God, she did not consult her fashion-book before she went to morning prayers."

They were leaving the cathedral.

"Do all the ladies in the precincts?" asked Tom, innocently.

"Look and judge, boy," the father answered, in the same bitter strain, "are they not fearfully and wonderfully made?" There was certainly a strange Rabelaisan humour lurking in the man, and the boy was likely to suffer then and in years to come. He was certain to gain a warped estimate of human nature. But the parent had been incensed shortly after his wife's death by the ogling of some gay old spiusters. They found him impervious, their antique smiles disregarded, their advances met coldly and with contempt. Their consciences smote them then, they became ashamed; he believed they bore him malice even after. But the whole of womankind was not in fault for the immodesty of some two or three. But he had heard of them whispering, "He will ruin that dear little boy! he will never marry again; what woman would ever endure him?"

"My boy, there are good women," the father declared afterwards, anxious to remove an ill impression if he had gone far to create one. "See there is old Lady Mary Footitt; she is an old maiden lady, worth a baker's dozen of some of the women we meet daily. No doubt she has her opinion of us, but I am not afraid of her opening her mouth to fill other people's. She might have been Lady Aylmer, but another Sir Aubrey put his veto upon it. You see Lady Mary has never married. Sir Aubrey bowed to authority—as I ought to have done. She has lived to grow old and forget her youthful ideas; she considers me a contumacious rebel, no doubt, and that is why we don't have her cards on our table."

The cynical parent remained with Tom Aylmer. Perhaps the lad discovered that one might live to have a jaundiced view of the world and human motives; that his father, bereaved, soured and disappointed, had come to regard people as arrogant, false, selfish, tyrannical when they had power; as subservient, cringing and despicable when in sub-

jection. Tom recollects that his father had had fights with the Dean and Chapter, in fact with everybody in authority. Tom had thought his father a much persecuted individual. But he came to the knowledge that there are always two sides to a question, and that there was a possibility that his father was often in the wrong. He did not like to think such things out, only to have pity; his father, no doubt, had often taken offence where none was given or meant. Many who regarded his father as cantankerous and unsociable did not take sufficiently into consideration his hard battle with life after being cut adrift, unprepared to fight circumstance; a man of strong perverse brain, but without gifts, they fathomed not his deep love, his agony seeing the young life drift away before his eyes, a young life which, if it might not have been preserved, might have been prolonged but for his narrow means. He never could chase away his phantom—he never tried—he loved to brood upon his wrongs. His existence was not pleasurable to himself; he became a curious compound of the morbid and the cynical, his only sheet anchor the child his girl-wife had left behind her.

Tom Aylmer was not clear of a pang when he recalled the immobile face, but he took comfort in the thought that by the expression on it his father had died in charity with all men. Tom did not wonder at feeling *outré* with the rest of mankind. When he returned to Tremenster it did not surprise him that the character of his house still held. He was the son of that disagreeable Aylmer. If he now sometimes debated the wisdom of his deceased parent, he never doubted his love and affection. But he began to hunger for friendly faces, for affection. He seemed to have no one in the world with whom he could take sweet counsel. Were he lighthearted, he felt it impossible to derive much benefit therefrom. His four walls confined all his wit and pleasantries to himself. If he sang or was inclined to be boisterous, his housekeeper might take it into her head that his solitary life had at last proved too much for him, and scared, go out for assistance. If he heard himself laugh, his laughter sounded oddly in his ears, and he was wont to wonder what effect his laughter would have upon other people. By-and-bye he got Dick Devensey to practice on.

"I think," had been at times his soliloquy, "I should have made a capital Robinson Crusoe—I wonder if there is another island, another Juan Fernandez, unoccupied!"

(To be continued.)

REUNION.

L

THUS stood we, ere Life's glad story
Waxed sad, and our faces wan;
And thus through a sunset glory
The crescent-like sea-line shone.
And, standing at gaze together,
Our fears were as clouds that flee,
Wind-chased, o'er the flame-red heather,
Till one with the wrinkled sea.

II.

Behind us, the fenceless passes
 Rose giddily, ledge on ledge;
 We gathered the shining grasses
 That grew at the sheer cliff's edge;
 As sounds that are heard when waking
 From dreams they awoke before,
 The hum of the breakers breaking
 Stole up from the viewless shore.

III.

Away from the shrill world's clamour,
 From glances more shrewd than words,
 We felt but the season's glamour,
 Elate as the banded birds.
 We recked not of future sorrow;
 The Present was all our care:
 What mattered the dim to-morrow,
 If only to-day was fair?

IV.

It fell, with a sound of terror,—
 The storm we had feared so long,
 Like Justice denouncing error,
 Like vengeance for bitter wrong.
 The sunshine from earth was taken;
 Through darkness and dole we trod;
 Of man, in his wrath, forsaken,
 We clung to the skirts of God!

V.

Now, darling, when reunited
 Our joy is but half complete:
 To sever with troth unlighted—
 Say, is it for this we meet?
 To find we have prayed so pronely,
 And suffered so long, in vain?
 To mingle our kisses only—
 One heart, yet for ever twain?

VI.

Fold—fold, love, your arms about me!
 Ere autumn's first rose-flakes fall;
 Again shall you stand without me,
 And muse where the white gulls call;
 Remembrance beguiling anguish
 From thoughts of the loveless dead,
 With visions of eyes that languish,
 Locked arms, and the resting head!

VII.

Then cherish each sight and sound, love,
 That frame us, this hallowed hour,
 The gulls that go whirling round, love;
 Blue wastes that the seamews scour;
 The voice of the surf; the grasses,
 Sun-kindled; the vesper hymn;
 The heather; the fenceless passes;
 The boat on the far sea's rim.

VIII.

—How calmly, to port returning,
 It moves, with its wings of white!
 Now darkened, now flushed to burning,
 Now lost in the mid-sun's light.
 Thus, purged of its earthly leaven,
 My soul shall find peace in death.
 Ah! hold me not back from heaven,
 Too fond! with a worldward breath!

VERNON ISMAY.

"CHARACTER IN COLOUR."

BY DR. N. HEINEMANN, F.R.G.S.

FROM the earliest ages it would seem that a natural instinct has imprinted what may be termed a natural signature upon different colours; ascribing to them, as the folk-lore of various nations plainly teaches, definite, though sometimes varying, characteristics.

That various colours exercise a species of reflex action upon their wearers appears to be involuntarily and unconsciously acknowledged in civilized dress, as well as among the painted nations of whom Humboldt said, that "had they been examined with the same care and attention as clothed nations, it would have been perceived that the most fertile imagination and the most inmutable caprice have created the fashions of painting as well as those of garments."

All the world over, most curious fancies and theories will be found to have clustered around colours, fancies whose origin is lost in remote antiquity; theories undoubtedly originating in the always wide-spread notion that, behind the outward and visible phenomena of the universe, there lies concealed a deep and mystical meaning; the *seen* symbolical of the *unseen*.

Perhaps of all colours *red* has everywhere been held in most superstitious regard—considered the most signally lucky or the reverse. In itself it may be termed an uncompromisingly *decided* colour, and one that would, for good or ill, hardly be associated with an idea of "half-measures."

According to ancient Germanic notions, Thor's hair and beard were red; and, later on, came the tradition bestowing hair of the same colour on Judas, the traitor.

Red is, as said by Schack, distinctly a foxy colour; though, as added by him, it would be most unjust to ascribe the foxy nature to any individual solely on account of his hair.

Red, although usually selected for Mephistophelean garments, was, as it is known by old Scottish superstition, distinctly held for a preservative against witchcraft or the evil eye; but whether on the homeopathic principle that "like cures like" is not stated.

The Chinese are said to wear a red thread or skein, silk preferred, as an amulet against evil spirits and bad luck in general.

In many parts of Kent and the south-eastern counties such a thread worn round the wrist is looked upon as a sure remedy for bleeding at the nose.

As a weather-warning a red sky may perhaps be placed in the colour facts rather than fancies.

Red in the morning is the shepherd's warning;
 Red at night is the shepherd's delight.

So runs the old rhyme, and again—

Evening red and morning grey
 Will send the traveller on his way;
 But evening grey and morning red
 Will bring down rain upon his head.

The pretty and fanciful ideas associated with Robin red-breast, according to Grimm, may principally, if not solely, be ascribed to the warm-

tinged vest which gives the impression of a warm heart behind it.

It seems natural to associate red with an idea of heat.

In popular belief red-headed persons are proverbially "peppery" in temper; and in man or brute alike eyes red and glaring ever give an expression of fiery anger.

Bell observes on this point, "In rage . . . the eyeballs are seen largely, they roll and are inflamed." And of madness he continues, "If you watch"—the expression of a violent madman in his paroxysm—"you may see the blood working to his head, his face acquires a darker red . . . his inflamed eye is fixed upon you, and his features lighten up into wildness and ferocity."

But enough of angry red; another expression is given by a gentle reddening; and by Dr. Burgess it is affirmed that a Circassian maiden who blushes "brings a higher price in the slave market."

Perhaps it is not generally known that if a negro be wounded in the face in such a manner as to destroy the natural pigmentary matter so as to leave a white cicatrix when healed, this spot, like the white man's face, will flush and redden with pleasure, passion, or shame.

Red, in the form of a cosmetic, for the enhancement of personal beauty is by no means peculiar to women.

Darwin gives Waitz as authority for the case instanced by him of a naked South American native, a very large, fine man, who worked hard for a whole fortnight to gain *chica* enough to paint himself red.

A companion picture to this individual may be found in the bushwoman mentioned by Burchell, who habitually used enough red ochre and oily unguent to have ruined any but a very rich husband, and plumed herself accordingly.

In some countries fashion has decreed that the teeth shall be coloured red, as well as blue, or the more common black. Indeed, "in the Malay archipelago it is," says Darwin, "considered shameful to have white teeth 'like those of a dog,'" and he quotes a man of Cochin China who expressed extreme contempt of the English ambassador's wife, describing the lady as having "white teeth like a dog, and a rosy colour like that of potatoe flowers."

A red or "tawny hide" is the favourite northwest American colour, and Humboldt is of opinion that the American Indians colour their bodies with red paint in order to "exaggerate their natural tint, just as European women have at different times added rouge and white paints and powders to naturally bright complexions," an idea, however, with which Darwin does not agree.

With the exception of some tribes near Delagoa Bay, black skins are not the rule among Kafirs. The usual colour is a mixture of red and black, forming most commonly a shade of chocolate.

But to tell a Kafir that he is light, fair, or like a white man would be taken by him as a very poor compliment.

The darker the more handsome, according to Kafir notions, and Darwin mentions one unfortunate fellow "so fair that no girl would marry him."

With ourselves, as with the Chinese, red cloth is laid down on occasions of ceremony, and especially for weddings; the Chinese, indeed, go a little farther in their marriage use of red than is

the case with us, for, with them, during the ceremony both bride and bridegroom drink from cups fastened together with a red string, symbolic of the thread of fate which has linked husband and wife.

In ancient Rome red shoes were originally looked upon as strictly characteristic of the demi-monde, though also officially worn by one magisterial order.

Red appears accepted as a royal colour.

Herod's robes of state are described as purple, but more correctly as scarlet.

In Burmah rubies are a royal monopoly, and the king is entitled "Lord of the Rubies."

Many magical properties were anciently assigned to this stone. It was held to be a most valuable amulet against evil thoughts, poison, plague, and demoniac influences, and consequently to keep the wearer perpetually in the enjoyment of good health; it was supposed to darken on the approach of danger, and become bright again only when the season of peril had passed away. With red fruits, red bed-quilts and hangings, red garments, or red ingredients mingled in the patient's drink, rubies were anciently believed to exert a distinct and definite influence upon fevers, inflammations, and all heated disorders of the blood.

Just as all red stones were classed by the ancients as rubies or carbuncles, so they called all blue stones indiscriminately sapphires; and, like the ruby, endowed them with rare virtues. Such an enemy to poison was the sapphire said to be, that were a spider, snake, toad, or any venomous living thing placed under a glass vessel with a sapphire, it would inevitably be killed by the jewel.

Unlike the ruby or diamond, a sapphire's value does not increase in proportion to its weight or size, but depends upon its purity of colour.

From the earliest known times truth and wisdom have been symbolized by blue.*

The sacrificial sheep, which by lying down to rest pointed out the spot where the Apostle Paul afterwards found the altar "to the unknown God," is traditionally believed before starting on its mission to have been adorned with blue.

Among the Israelites the sacred veil of the Temple was of blue, as well as purple and scarlet, which colours enter largely into the robes of their high priest; with the exception of the ephod, to which the mystical breastplate was attached with a lace of blue, and of which we read, "He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue." That a mystic significance should early have been attached to blue, the colour of the sky, is by no means surprising. Among the Druids this was a sacred colour. Minerva was also depicted with eyes of "calm, serene, heavenly blue;" and to this day Egyptian Arabs, when about to journey, throw salt into the fire under the belief that when the sacred blue flame thus produced arises every evil or unclean spirit must depart.

Among ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics a curious all blue figure is very often to be met with. Touching the ground with hands and feet, and forming a kind of frame with its disproportionately long and slender body, it symbolizes the blue firma-

* See also "The Sacred Colour," HOME CHIMES, Vol. ii., No. 15, New Series, page 230, for various curious facts and fancies concerning blue.

ment, apparently touching at the horizon and extending itself above the earth.

With the noteworthy exception of Minerva, blue eyes, while considered the most gentle and yielding, are not held so intellectual as brown or so-called black.

Clear bright blue eyes are very rarely found with a melancholy cast-of countenance, and dull, muddy blue eyes often show a vacant mind and indolent temperament.

Popular belief puts down white cats with blue eyes as deaf. A belief which has received Darwin's sanction.

Mention has already been made of the connection supposed to exist between blue flames and evil intelligences, but here European differs from Asiatic superstition to a marked extent. Among western nations, far from banishing such things, these flames have commonly been looked upon as a natural adjunct to magical incantations.

In necromantic theatrical representations blue fire is a recognized institution, and Shakespeare, alluding doubtless to the idea prevalent in his time of some mysterious sympathy between this colour and disembodied or evil spirits, makes Richard III. say:—

The lights burns blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? Myself? there's none else by.

Methought the souls of all that I had murdered
Came to my tent; and every one did threat
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

The Chinese sacred or mystical colour is yellow, and hence charms on yellow paper are very common with them. Sometimes these are worn about the person, sometimes hung about the house, or, in times of special emergency, burnt, after which the ashes are swallowed in tea or hot water as a protection from misfortune or evil influences.

Yellow nails, according to Darwin, are fashionable in some parts of Africa, and travellers tell us that a yellow complexion is most highly prized by Java telles.

Hair yellow, golden, or flaxen during childhood frequently darkens with advancing years—it is usually found with rosy-white skins and light eyes.

Light or yellow haired persons are supposed by some to be less passionate and more placid, or even phlegmatic, than those whose hair is dark.

Topinard classifies hair as—(1) flaxen (approaching that of albinos); (2) flaxen (properly so called); (3) golden yellow; (4) sandy, followed by chestnut, brown, and black.

He sets the proportion of yellow, sandy, and fair hair among the

English . . .	as 48·9 to 23·4 (brown or dark).
Scotch . . .	" 50·2 " 23·0 "
Irish . . .	" 50·5 " 23·8 "
Germans . . .	" 48·0 " 23·8 "
Scandinavians . . .	" 68·4 " 11·8 "
Spanish & Portuguese . . .	" 23·7 " 57·8 "

Yellow whites to the eyes are supposed to indicate melancholy, passion, and, probably, what is known as a bilious temperament. Green, despite its association with "green and yellow melancholy," with "green and white, forsaken quite," has been time out of mind appropriated by poets

as the lover's own especial colour. "An eagle," says the Nurse to Juliet, "hath not so green, . . . so fair an eye as Paris hath."

A peculiar shade of green eyes sometimes may be found with intensely red hair; a combination looked upon by Topinard as possibly pointing back to an extinct race which once "might have advanced as far as England and the confines of the Rhine." Formerly sacred to elves and fairies, who might be supposed to resent the presumption of mortals sufficiently daring to assume and wear their colour, green is generally regarded as ominous or unlucky.

Even at the present day there are, it is said, persons who seriously attribute the unhappy condition of Ireland to the malign influence of the national colour.

With diamonds, indeed, a green tinge cannot be held as unlucky—for Mr. Emanuel has instanced one of these stones, the worth of which untinted would (from its weight) have been about £22, but which, from its vivid green tint, sold for £300.

In chemical composition it is said that the emerald resembles the beryl.

Mahomedans and, indeed, all Asiatics greatly prize emeralds, believing that this gem endows its owner with bravery and moral purity, and that, powdered, it possesses many rare and precious medicinal virtues.

White is not, in the folk-lore of colours, without its mystical influences and attributes.

Negro superstition pictures demons and evil spirits as white; looking upon it also as a token of sickness.

According to Darwin, one title of the Zulu king is a complimentary "You that are black!" and the same authority speaks of African Moors who shuddered and frowned "at the whiteness of Mungo Park's skin."

Any bird with a white breast is, in Devonshire, regarded as a certain warning of death; while in the neighbouring county of Cornwall, a broken-hearted maiden, who has loved and been betrayed, is said to come back after death to haunt her faithless lover in the form of a white hare; somewhat capriciously saving him from danger at first, but always causing his death after a longer or shorter period.

A white dove or pigeon settling on a house is held a sure harbinger of misfortune in the midland counties, where it is also reckoned most unlucky to meet a white horse without making use of a countercharm; a superstition that in Northamptonshire connects itself with a white mouse.

In Scotland white cows are supposed to give poor and altogether inferior milk.

A Devonshire rhyme runs thus:—

If you have a horse with one white leg, keep him to his end;
If you have a horse with two white legs, sell him to a friend;
If you have a horse with three white legs, send him far away;
If you have a horse with four white legs, keep him not a day.

White chickens are offered in sacrifice to African sprites, elves, and deities; and travellers tell that, in some districts of Africa, a white fowl may be given, but must never be sold.

The superstition concerning so-called "white-witches" even in these days dies hard.

Black is by no means without its folk-lore, and,

emblematic of evil, darkness, and the like, is more generally and commonly associated with ideas of magic than white.

In many parts of Africa the sacrificial animals offered to evil or malignant deities are black; and in England, formerly, a black cat was a most dangerous companion for any aged woman.

Even its fair, white blossoms have not sufficed to protect the black-thorn from a superstition of ill-luck; brought indoors (in the south-eastern counties) it is regarded as an infallible death-token; a fancy which also connects itself with white May in bloom, and which, according to some, may probably have originated in the increased mortality among invalids who have survived the winter, but who droop and fail before the changeable temperature and keen winds of an English spring—dying when the May is in full flower.

Many interesting observations have during the last few years been made on what may be styled natural colours.

Forbes has pointed out that shells found at the southern extremity of their geographical limit, and in shallow water, are always more brightly coloured than those of the same species found further north or dredged up from a great depth.

Gould maintains that the plumage of birds confined to continents is far gayer and more brilliant than is the case with birds found on islands.

Darwin's remarks on the value of colour as a means of protection are well known, and need not be cited here; an instance may, however, be quoted from observations by Bates.

He tells us that in a district where an Ithomia abounds in gaudy swarms, another butterfly, a Leptalis, is often found mingled in the same flock, and closely resembles the Ithomia in every shade and stripe of colour, giving a distinct example of imitation; and it is said that in all cases the mocked, usually known as "nauseous" butterflies, emit a peculiar and offensive odour, which renders them distasteful to creatures which would otherwise prey upon them.

Facts collected by Heusinger seem to show that white sheep and pigs are injured by certain plants, which the dark coloured individuals may eat with impunity.

Some farmers in Florida, he says, stated all their pigs were black "because they ate the paint-root (Lachnanthes), which coloured their bones pink, and caused the hoofs of all but the black varieties to drop off."

Besides the various shades and tints of hair, it has been stated that in some races the hair of the head rarely, if ever, turns grey.

Old dogs, it is well known, frequently show grey or white hairs about the muzzle; but Blyth mentions only one instance of the beard and whiskers in a monkey becoming white through old age.

This aged Macacus cynomolgus, whose moustaches are described as "remarkably long and human-like," is said to have "presented a ludicrous resemblance to one of the reigning monarchs of Europe, after whom he was universally nicknamed."

That birds and other creatures are attracted by and appreciative of colour is abundantly proved by observation.

The gay little humming-birds, for instance,

decorate their nests; and the playing passages of the bower birds are said to be "tastefully ornamented with bright shells and gaily coloured objects" of no utility save the pleasure found in their possession.

The colour of the skin forms one of the most conspicuous and best marked differences in the various races of man.

It was formerly thought that such differences might be, to a great extent, or even solely, attributed to long exposure to varied climates, an opinion which Pallas was the first to reject as untenable, pointing out that "the distribution of coloured races, most of whom must have long inhabited their present homes, does not coincide with corresponding differences of climate," while (though, as Darwin says, the uniformity of the Jew has been greatly exaggerated), gipsies and Jews in all parts of the world, in whatever clime they are to be met with, present, at any rate, some fairly uniform characteristics; and Dutch families settled in Africa for the past three centuries show no marked change of colour in their descendants.

An atmosphere either very damp or dry has been supposed to exert more influence upon the colour of the skin than extremes of heat or cold; but this is doubtful.

It is said that the colour of hair and skin in human beings is sometimes correlated in a surprising manner with immunity from the action of certain vegetable poisons, and hence it occurred to Darwin "that negroes and other dark races might have acquired their dark tints by the darker individuals escaping from the deadly influence of the miasma of their native countries during a long series of generations."

There are districts in northern Africa which "natives are compelled annually to leave, though the negro inhabitants can remain with safety;" but, as remarked by Darwin, "that the immunity of the negro is in any degree correlated with the colour of his skin is a mere conjecture; it may be correlated with some difference in his blood, nervous system, or tissues."

It is maintained that a tropical sun, while burning or even blistering a white skin, does not injure a black one in the least.

That this is not the result of habit in the individual is proved by the fact that children only six or eight months old are often carried about naked, and exposed to the full rays, and yet are not affected.

The colour of the Quichas of the Andes varies very greatly, and in accordance with the position of the valleys inhabited by them. The colour of skin and hair are plainly correlated, as also is the texture of the hair with its colour.

Among the cats commonly known as tortoise-shell, the epithet, with very rare exceptions, applies only to females, the males being usually a rusty red.

The colour of a new-born negro child has been described as a reddish nut-brown, soon turning slate-grey. At the age of one year the child becomes black in the Soudan, and at the age of three years in Egypt.

Aboriginal Australian infants are at first yellowish-brown, afterwards darkening. Some Paraguans are born a whitish-yellow, but in the course of a few weeks assume their parents' yellowish-brown tint.

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BY ANGELO J. LEWIS.

"WHY don't you run over to Paris? You'll find all you want in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and get a pleasant change in the bargain. I only wish I had as good an excuse for the trip."

The speaker was an old friend whom I had just met in the reading-room of the British Museum, and to whom I had been complaining that the Library did not contain sundry French authorities necessary to some literary work which I chanced to have in hand. It seemed to me that his words were words of wisdom. There is nothing like going to the fountain-head. No doubt the National Library of France would be the best place to procure what I needed; further, I am rather fond of Paris, and I had not visited it for some years. The idea, once started, would not be dismissed. I thought about Paris all day, dreamt about it all night, and two days later, on a warm evening in the summer of 1872, I alighted at the St. Lazare Railway Station. I put up in the first instance at an hotel, but as I proposed to make a stay of some weeks in Paris, I did not remain there, but took an *appartement meublé*, or set of furnished chambers, in the Rue Vivienne. My new residence was rather high up, being what is popularly known as the "first floor down," but I had not at that date the objection to stairs which increasing age and rotundity have since developed. Béranger declares that at twenty one may live very comfortably in a cockloft. I won't venture to go quite so far as that, but I found myself remarkably jolly in my sky-parlours. They were light and airy, comfortably furnished, and within a stone's throw of the reading-room at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and with these recommendations I was well content.

I may here explain, for the benefit of those

readers whose knowledge of Paris is limited to life in hotels, that nearly all of the houses in that city are let on what we in England know as the "flat" system—an *appartement* sometimes covering a whole floor, sometimes part only of a floor. The furniture for the most part is the property of the tenants, but some landlords, as in London, let their apartments furnished. As a rule, tenants are waited on by their own servants, but in the case of a bachelor occupier of furnished apartments, like myself, he generally arranges with the *concierge*, or porter, to keep his rooms in order, and provide a roll and coffee for the early breakfast; the mid-day *déjeuner*, or lunch, and dinner being taken out of doors, at one of the numerous restaurants.

The mere fact of two persons living in the same house does not of itself form any ground for intimacy, but from chance meetings on the common staircase I gradually became acquainted with the occupant of the rooms immediately beneath mine, a young artist named Armand Lemoine. As the ruling powers in Paris, out of consideration, I suppose, for the health of its students, only allow them to use the national reading-room from ten to four, I had plenty of spare time on my hands, and I spent a good deal of it in the company of my new friend. Of the other occupants of the house I knew little more than their names. The rooms opposite my own were occupied by an elderly widower, a Monsieur Guérin, and a hard-featured *bonne* who acted as his cook and housekeeper. From the appetizing odours which pervaded the landing about six o'clock each day, when Monsieur Guérin returned home to dinner, I inferred that she was by no means a contemptible provider. My friend Lemoine occupied the whole of the floor below, part as dwelling, part as studio. Beneath him was a dentist, and below the dentist a fashionable milliner, while the ground-floor was occupied by the shops of a tailor and a money-changer.

I had been some three or four weeks in my new abode, and was beginning to feel thoroughly

Parisian, when I noticed a circumstance which somewhat amused me. I had in the cupboard which served as my wine-cellar a bottle of absinthe. I never touch absinthe myself, not on moral grounds, though I am told it is a reprehensible beverage, but simply because I don't happen to like it. Absinthe, however, chanced to be the chosen "vanity" of a genial old Bohemian, Paul Varras, who had been introduced to me by Lemoine; and on an occasion when Varras had visited me by invitation in my rooms, I had made a point of procuring a supply of his favourite liquor. From that day the bottle, still more than three parts full, had remained, closely corked, in my cupboard. On two or three occasions, however, on returning to my rooms after my day's work at the library, the peculiar aromatic smell of absinthe was distinctly perceptible. The perfume is unmistakable, and once smelt, is never forgotten. At first I took no notice of the matter, but on the second or third occasion, the aroma being more than ordinarily perceptible, it occurred to me to open the cupboard and look at the bottle. Beyond a doubt the liquid had diminished very considerably since I had first placed it in the cupboard. I naturally put the deficiency down to the account of the concierge, but was not disposed to trouble myself much about the matter. I had learnt by experience that a bachelor living in apartments must expect to pay these little tolls in some shape or other, and, if they be not too exorbitant, generally promotes his own peace and comfort by letting them pass unchallenged. In the evening, however, I chanced to mention, while smoking a cigar with Lemoine, that Père Bertrand, as we used to call him, shared our friend Varras's weakness for the opal fluid. To my surprise he got quite excited on the subject.

"What is that you say? Père Bertrand, he drink your absinthe! Not posseeble—never of the life!" exclaimed Armand, who, I should explain, made a point, for the sake of practice, of speaking English at every opportunity, though his limited knowledge of that tongue, and literal translations of French idioms, gave his conversation a comical resemblance to the immortal phrase-book, *English as she is Spoke*. "Bertrand!" he continued, "but if he drink absinthe, it is a hypocrite of the worse kind."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed in surprise, for I had hitherto found Armand extremely tolerant in such matters. "It isn't the square thing exactly, but I suppose most of these old fellows are fond of a drop, and if it comes in their way they help themselves. It's 'human nature,' as Sam Slick says."

"But no—but no, my friend," replied Armand excitedly. "I know not what you call Sam Sleek, but you are not there" (his literal translation of *vous n'y êtes pas*). "It is that Père Bertrand has a son, who has ruin to himself the life with the absinthe, and Papa Bertrand say always it is poison, milk of devil, all that there is of infernal. And if, with all, he does himself drink it to the sly, it is too str-r-r-ong!"

"Oh, that's all?" I rejoined. "Well, Papa Bertrand is not the only man in the world who doesn't quite practise what he preaches. It would be rather good fun though, if he professes such a strong objection to absinthe, to catch him at it."

"Oh yes," said Armand; "we take him on the act, and mock ourselves of him. Truly he will make a droll of countenance. Let us wash him!"

And we "washed" him accordingly, but to no purpose. The old man never touched the absinthe during the time when his domestic duties would naturally cause him to be in my room. I laid in ambush and pounced out unexpectedly upon him. I ran back again after starting in the morning, on the most frivolous of pretexts, but (save to make him suspect, I fancy, that I was not quite right in my head) without any result. He was clearly too sharp for me. When I came home in the afternoon, however, there was pretty sure to be the tell-tale aroma, and the liquor in the bottle was still steadily diminishing.

A few days later, a circumstance occurred which heightened the mystery. Père Bertrand came upstairs while I was taking my cup of coffee one Sunday morning, and asked permission to do his work in the rooms at once, as he was going to spend the day with a friend at Bougival. I made no objection, and from my window I saw him start an hour later in gala costume. "My absinthe bottle is safe for to-day," I thought. Strange to say, on returning to my room in the afternoon, there was the usual aniseed-like aroma, and the liquor had again suffered a marked diminution. Père Bertrand did not return until some hours later. It was clear, therefore, that he was not the culprit; but if not, who was? The mystery was thickening, and I was more than ever determined to solve it. The next day, after Père Bertrand had done his usual morning's work, I made a private mark at the level of the liquid in the bottle, and then taking up my position with Lemoine in the room below with the door ajar, watched carefully for any one to pass up or down the staircase. Monsieur Guérin went away to his bureau at his usual time, and shortly afterwards his hard-featured *bonne* started for her morning's marketing, returning about an hour later. Lemoine and myself felt absolutely certain that no one had entered my rooms that day, and we could only suppose that the mysterious visitant had in some way got scent of our being on the watch, and had held aloof accordingly. We had only taken a light *déjeuner* on the premises, and about five o'clock, feeling hungry, we decided to abandon our watch for the day, and to betake ourselves to the Restaurant Richelieu in quest of dinner. It had just begun to rain, and before starting, therefore, I ran up to my own room to fetch my umbrella. Mystery of mysteries! No sooner had I opened the door than my nostrils were greeted with the familiar perfume, and I found that the liquor in the bottle had sunk another quarter of an inch since I marked it in the morning. With all our vigilance, somebody had obtained access to the room; but how?

The next day, after again marking the bottle, I put in practice a little device which I had once seen used by a detective to discover whether a given door was opened. I waited till Père Bertrand had done his work for the day, and then after having closed my door as usual, I thrust between the door and the jamb, near the top, a little piece of folded paper. If the door was opened the paper would naturally fall to the ground. Having thus set my trap, I went off to my work at the Bibliothèque Nationale, returning,

as usual, about half-past four in the afternoon. The tell-tale paper was still in position, proving clearly that the door had not been opened, and yet, when I entered the room, the usual smell of absinthe was perceptible, and the bottle showed the customary diminution. If I had been a believer in spiritualism, I should have been tempted to suppose that some John King, or Mrs. Guppy, with the exceptional locomotive facilities of their kind, had been making free with my liquor. Early prejudice, however, prevented my adopting this easy and rational explanation, and drove me to the comparatively feeble conclusion that there must be some second entrance to my apartments.

I communicated my suspicion to Lemoine, and we determined to test it by a minute examination of the premises. To do so the more at our ease, we thought it better to wait till the next day, when Monsieur Guérin had gone to his bureau, and his housekeeper to her daily marketing. Accordingly, the next morning we waited till the coast was clear, and then, locking the door, began our perquisition. There could clearly be no access by the windows. There was no balcony, and only the ordinary allowance of window-sill, and unless, therefore, my mysterious visitor had, like Mr. D. D. Home, the power of floating out of one window and into another, he could hardly get in that way. We rapped the walls, examined the ceilings, scrutinized the carpets, and even looked up the chimneys, without gaining the slightest clue. "Out! I can no more," said Lemoine; "I gif my tongue to ze dogs; what you call gif him up." I was beginning to fear I should have to do the same myself, when my eye chanced to fall on a certain *armoire*, or movable cupboard, which stood against the wall in my bedroom. It was a tall narrow mahogany affair with a plate-glass door, fitted with shelves inside, and contained sundry of my personal habiliments. "Suppose we have a look behind this cupboard," I said, "just lend a hand, will you." I prepared to exert a considerable amount of force, but to my surprise the structure moved quite easily, being in truth considerably less solid than it looked (not an unusual feature of French furniture), and withal mounted on castors. We made a simultaneous examination. "Aha," said Lemoine, "we have here the word of the enigma." Immediately behind the cupboard was a door, papered over to match the wall, after a fashion of frequent use in France. We opened it without difficulty, and found that it communicated with a passage forming part of the adjoining *appartement*, and opening out of the small kitchen where Monsieur Guérin's housekeeper was accustomed to conduct her culinary operations.

After this discovery, the identity of the mysterious absinthe-drinker was scarcely doubtful. The door opened inward to the passage, and the intruder had therefore only to open it and to push aside the *armoire* in order to gain a free passage. To effect her retreat, she had merely to pass again through the opening, and pull the cupboard back into its position against the wall. We tested it from her own side, and found that there was not the slightest difficulty about the matter. There were a couple of hand-holes in the back of the wardrobe, such as we frequently find behind a piano, and these afforded the necessary grip to get the piece of furniture back into its position. "One

thing puzzles me," I said. "How does she know whether I am in my room or not? I don't always go out at the same hour; and the good lady would find it a little awkward if she chanced to pay her daily visit when I was at home." Lemoine laughed. "You do not know what is a *trou Judas*?" he said, "I show you." After a little search, he discovered and pointed out to me no less than four small holes in the partition, made apparently with a large bradawl or gimlet, and we satisfied ourselves that through one or other of these a hidden observer on the other side could command every part of my two rooms, and therefore could ascertain with perfect ease whether I was at home or otherwise.

The matter was now clear enough to our own minds, but the case rested so far only on circumstantial evidence, and we were determined, if possible, to convict and expose the offender. I cared very little about the petty theft, but the idea that I had been subject at all hours of the day and night to a secret espionage by this horrible woman exasperated me sorely. Lemoine was immensely tickled at what he was pleased to consider my British bashfulness, but he was quite willing to second me to the utmost. With all possible precaution we closed the secret door, and replaced the cupboard in its usual position, after which we adjourned to Armand's room to consult as to our future proceedings. We discussed sundry schemes for the capture of the culprit, but they all had some weak point. Lemoine was rather in favour of mixing a strong dose of ipecacuanha with the absinthe, but this, though appropriate as a punishment, seemed scarcely reliable as a means of detection. Meanwhile, in talking over the matter, I remembered that on two different occasions when I had chanced to leave money on the mantelpiece, I had fancied that the amount had diminished, but being somewhat careless in money matters, I could not be quite sure what had been the original sum, so concluded that I must be mistaken. Now, however, I felt satisfied that my suspicions had been well-founded, and as this gave a graver aspect to the matter, I decided, on Lemoine's suggestion, to take the advice of the police. Accordingly, I went to the Prefecture, where I was received by a very gentlemanly official. He heard my statement, inquired at what time the suspected person was usually absent, and promised to send a detective at that hour the next morning to look into the matter.

As luck would have it, the next morning Monsieur Guérin's housekeeper went out considerably later than usual, and I began to feel fidgety lest my expected visitor, chancing to meet her on the stairs, might give her the alarm. At last, however, she started on her morning's errands, and a few minutes later my visitor arrived, a quiet-looking little man, who might from his appearance have been a small tradesman or a lawyer's clerk. I never saw a face with less expression, and I remember wondering that such a stupid-looking man should have selected the difficult business of a detective. I soon found, however, that Monsieur Bernat (the name on his card) was fully up to his work, and I strongly suspect that his stupid appearance was purposely assumed, and formed a valuable item of his stock in trade.

His smile, when I told him of my fear that he might meet the suspected person on the stairs and so give her the alarm, might have been that of an eminent mathematician asked by a schoolboy whether he knew the *Pons Aenorum*.

"Monsieur need have no fear," he said. "Mademoiselle Marguerite has not seen me, but I have seen her, and, unless I much mistake, we are old acquaintances. But we will settle this matter first. Will Monsieur have the kindness to recapitulate the facts? It is better to have them at first hand."

I repeated my story, and showed Monsieur Bernat the door behind the wardrobe and the holes in the partition, going into the next *appartement* to illustrate how easily the wardrobe could be pushed aside from the door.

"No," he said, "it is not quite like that that your visitor comes in. She does not need so wide an opening as that. See, it is like this."

Putting his hand into one of the holes I have mentioned in the back of the wardrobe, and holding it firmly, he pushed the opposite side only of the *armoire* so as to make it describe a quarter revolution, like an opening door. The displacement was considerably less than in the manner I had suggested, but I thought it just as likely that I was right after all.

"How can you tell?" I said, incredulously.

"Look," he said, and following the direction of his glance, I saw that the polished flooring underneath the piece of furniture showed marks of friction corresponding with the movement he had indicated.

"Now, then, to catch the thief," said Monsieur Bernat. "Who occupies the rooms beneath these?"

"A friend of mine, Monsieur Lemoine."

"And he will help you?"

"Certainly; he is nearly as much interested in the matter as I am myself."

"Good. We shall trap your thief."

By Monsieur Bernat's instructions I at once procured a fresh bottle of absinthe, and after removing a little from it, placed it in my cupboard, and took away the other, which was now all but exhausted. I also left some money, all of which was secretly marked, in a careless way upon the mantelpiece, and went as usual to my work at the library.

On my return I found that a handsome toll had been taken of the absinthe, and that a couple of two-franc pieces were missing.

The next morning, as soon as the suspected woman had started for her morning's marketing, Monsieur Bernat made his appearance with a small black bag, from which he produced some thin cord and a few tools. Almost before I had finished my report, he had his coat off, and with the dexterity of a skilled mechanic had bored a hole close beside the wardrobe through the floor into the room below. He then fixed a little screw-eye in the wainscot close behind the hole, and another in the back of the wardrobe, in such a position that they just met. Fastening the cord securely to the last-mentioned screw-eye, he passed it through the one in the wainscot, and down through the hole in the flooring to the room below. The latter was rather a troublesome operation; but by attaching the cord to a loop of wire like a

gigantic hair-pin, he succeeded. I watched his proceedings, but would not venture to ask questions till he chose to vouchsafe an explanation.

"Now," he said at last, when he had completed his task, "our trap is ready. The thief pushes away the *armoire*, as usual; she walks in, she goes to the cupboard for her *petit verre* of absinthe. Meanwhile, we pull the string from the room below, the *armoire* goes back to his place, and crac, she is trapped. Before she recovers from her first surprise, we are with her. Will Monsieur be so good as to go down into the room below, and pull steadily on that cord."

One side of the wardrobe was now moved away from the wall, in the position which it must naturally occupy to allow any one to pass through the opening. I began to understand Monsieur Bernat's plan, and going down into Lemoine's room, I pulled the cord as directed. I had to pull pretty strongly, and I was half afraid the cord would break, but it bore the strain perfectly, and I could feel that the wardrobe yielded, and was drawn back to the wall. I returned to the room above and found Monsieur Bernat putting away his tools.

"The trap works perfectly," he said. "Now, if it pleases Monsieur, we will descend to the room below."

We went downstairs into Lemoine's room accordingly. The mechanism of the trap was explained to him, and at Monsieur Bernat's request he undertook to pull and hold the cord when it became necessary to do so, in order that the detective and myself might be free to rush upstairs and to capture the prisoner.

We had been waiting about a quarter of an hour when the housekeeper was heard slowly ascending the staircase, and going into Monsieur Guérin's rooms. Another hour passed, and I was beginning to fear that the culprit had somehow taken the alarm, when the piece of cord hanging against the wall began to creep slowly upwards. The detective pointed silently to it, and at the same time pulled his boots off. I followed his example. He then walked to the open window, and taking a sou from his pocket let it fall on to the pavement beneath. Seeing my look of inquiry, he said—

"Merely a signal to a colleague, Monsieur. If this is the person I imagine, we may be glad of assistance. Now, Monsieur Lemoine, give us time, please, to get well up to the next floor. Then pull the cord, and hold tight till you hear us enter. Your key, Monsieur."

I handed him the key of my room, and in our stocking-feet we noiselessly crept up the stairs. Just outside the door, Monsieur Bernat paused till we heard the movement of the wardrobe, followed by a little shriek of surprise from the startled intruder, then, quick as thought, he thrust the key into the lock, and entered. The woman, not unnaturally frightened at the spontaneous and apparently supernatural movement of a heavy piece of furniture, stood in the middle of the room, gazing at the mysterious wardrobe. The bottle of absinthe, from which she had evidently been drinking, lay broken on the ground, where she had dropped it in the first moment of her terror.

"*La rousse*" (the police), she screamed.

"Aha, my girl, you recollect me," said Monsieur Bernat. "I thought we were old friends."

The woman saw the mistake she had made,

"*Canaille ! I know you not.*" she said.

"We will settle that at the Préfecture," was the cool reply.

She flew at him like a tigress, but he caught her wrists, and held her with a grip of iron. At this moment Lemoine and a shabby-looking stranger, who proved to be Monsieur Bernat's assistant, appeared on the scene.

"Quick, Antoine," said his chief, "*La ligotte.*"

With the dexterity of a conjuror the second detective whipped out a stout cord, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the wrists and ankles of the infuriated woman were securely tied.

"Now, Marguerite Beauvais, alias Suzon Lebrun, we can talk at our ease."

"Suzon Lebrun, I know not what you say," protested the unhappy woman, but her blanched lips and sudden look of terror showed that the name conveyed only too clear an accusation.

"We shall soon know," said Monsieur Bernat. "Let us see, in the first place, what this abundant chevelure has to tell us."

So saying, he gently lifted the curly blue-black fringe which shaded the forehead of his captive. The whole came off in his hands, revealing beneath a closely trimmed crop of a reddish colour.

Up to that moment I had regarded the native Irish as the natural language of invective, and French as a light and frivolous tongue, just strong enough, say, for cookery books and indelicate novels, but that moment showed me my mistake. In the whole course of my experience I have never heard so much bad language, or of such a concentrated quality, as Miss Suzon Lebrun compressed into a few short minutes on that occasion.

"It is strange," said Monsieur Bernat mockingly. "Mademoiselle has the fair complexion of Suzon Lebrun. Let us see if perchance she has also the tattoo marks."

In spite of the woman's struggles, he pulled up her sleeve to the shoulder, and there, on the part of the arm where persons of less heroic mould usually carry marks of vaccination, was the presentment of a flaming torch, and the three letters, *V.L.C.* (for *Vive la Commune*).

Monsieur Bernat made me a polite bow.

"I have to thank Monsieur for the opportunity of making an important capture. This lady is Mademoiselle Suzon Lebrun, who distinguished herself under the Commune as a pétroleuse, and for whom the police have been searching ever since." ("Grépin!" hissed Mademoiselle between her teeth.) "Monsieur may henceforth leave his absinthe bottle in his cupboard with perfect confidence. I can promise him that Mademoiselle will not trouble him for some years to come."

Monsieur Bernat's prophecy proved correct, for Mademoiselle Suzon was duly tried as a pétroleuse, and sent to finish her days in New Caledonia. The mystery of the hidden door proved to be no mystery at all: the reason of its existence being simply that the two *appartements* on the upper floor were originally intended for one only. When they were let separately, M. Bertrand was wont to screw up the door of communication, and place the wardrobe in front of it, but the screws had been withdrawn by Mademoiselle Suzon for her own purposes. I need hardly say that I took good care to have the door properly secured, and the peep-holes in the partition duly plugged, for the

remainder of my stay in Paris. The removal of Mademoiselle Suzon was a clear gain to public safety. The only person who could not be got to view it in that light was Monsieur Guérin. It was explained to him that she had taken service with him under cover of false papers; he admitted that he believed her to have frequently robbed him, and he was told that she would in all probability ultimately have murdered him for the sake of a larger haul, but I never met him on the staircase without his countenance assuming a ferocious scowl, as if I had done him a personal injury. "What will you?" he says to his intimates. "One is not perfect. My poor Marguerite was not a *rosière*, I dare say; but where shall I find another housekeeper who will cook me such *soles à la Normande?*"

POPULAR SUPERSTITIONS.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

A NYONE who has resided much in the country must have noted the quantity and quaintness of the small superstitions which still obtain among the lowly folk. It is remarkable with what tenacity these superstitions still continue to hold a place among the higher beliefs, clinging like parasites of a sturdy growth and forming quite a feature in our social history. In many a home-stead and many a village throughout the countryside the cherished beliefs of philosophers from the days of Plato and Pliny have been handed down from generation to generation, with a firm faith in their credibility. Much of this folk-lore, which appears ridiculous to us who are better informed, may be traced to its origin among all that was learned in by-gone days. The marvels of science may some time in the future do much to satisfy the craving for wonderment that appears to be inherent in human nature, which hitherto has been contented with the curiosities of superstition.

It is not always the homely or the ignorant, however, who indulge in the practice of these small superstitions; they appear to be, more or less common, in some form or other, to the whole of the community.

We remember, not long ago, seeing a highly educated young lady who had passed a Cambridge examination with honours, sitting with some apple pipes, each being named after one of her male acquaintances, which she was carefully dropping into the embers, with an incantation something like this:

If you love me pop and fly;
If you hate me lie and die.

The pip that popped the loudest represented the lover that loved most heartily.

About lovers there are, of course, numerous superstitions, but it is only possible to mention a few of them. Burns, in his poem of *Hallow-e'en*, gives a particular account of several charms and spells which are common on that night among the peasantry of West Scotland, for any lass who desires to pry into futurity respecting the form of her future husband. For particulars of these we must refer the reader to the poem itself, but here are a few of English origin. If a girl, in shelling

peas, find a peascod with nine peas in it she should place it over the kitchen door: the first bachelor who enters will love her. If you sneeze on Sunday morning fasting, you will enjoy your own true love to everlasting. If the fire burns brightly when poked it is a sign the absent lover is in a good temper. Any young man who is anxious to dream of his lady-love, should procure the backbone of a rabbit, into which he must stick nine pins and put the whole under his pillow. A girl, on seeing the first new moon of the new year, if she take off a stocking and run to a stile, will find under her great toe a hair of the same colour as her future husband's. A woman is warned against marrying a man, the initial of whose surname is the same as her own; for

To change the name and not the letter,
Is to change for worse and not for better.

The luckiest thing a man can present to his sweetheart is the first egg laid by a pullet. If an unmarried person happens to be placed at dinner between man and wife, the probability is he or she will be married during the year. A man should never go courting on a Friday, nor indeed should he undertake any business of importance on that day. It was formerly considered such an unlucky day by sailors that they would not take a ship out of port on a Friday.

But let us turn to some that are more generally applicable, for superstition has provided for man from the cradle to the grave and beyond it. It will be a very lucky child born with a caul. Any possessor of the caul will never be drowned. It is a common occurrence at the present day to see this article advertised for sale in the daily papers. Any child born on Christmas-day will be able to see spirits—a very doubtful benefit.

An old doggerel says that a child

Born on a Monday, fair in face;
Born on a Tuesday, full of grace;
Born on a Wednesday, full of woe;
Born on a Thursday, has far to go;
Born on a Friday, free in giving;
Born on Saturday, work hard for its living;
But the child that is born on the Sabbath day,
Is blithe and bonny, good and gay.

If you rock the cradle when the baby is not in it the child will be sure to die. The child that does not cry when christened is too good to live. If you cut a child's finger-nails before it is a year old, it will be a thief when it grows up; they should always be bitten off if necessary. Children with much down on their arms are born to be rich. When a friend brings a baby to your house for the first time you should give it a cake, some salt, and an egg.

The remedies prescribed for the cure of diseases are both numerous and singular. For instance, if a child has the thrush, you should say the eighth Psalm over it three times a day for three days. Another method, as they say in the cookery books, is to catch a duck and hold its bill wide open close to the child's mouth, and the disease will slowly but surely depart. Any one suffering from a styte on the eye should pull a hair from the tail of a black cat and rub it nine times over the pustule. Those who are subject to cramp will be glad to hear of a simple remedy. When you take off your shoes and stockings on going to bed, lie them

crosswise at the foot of the bed; or turn your slippers soles upwards and place them under the bed. Roast mouse is a sure cure for the measles. If a child is suffering from the whooping-cough, it will be cured if you find a married couple whose names are Joseph and Mary and induce them to lay their hands on its head. There was also a belief in the olden days that a child who had once ridden on a bear would never catch the whooping-cough; and as prevention is better than cure, the owner of a bear, when bear-baiting was in fashion, derived a considerable income from this superstition, and doubtless encouraged it.

Many of the sensations of the body to which we all are liable have been made the subject of these small superstitions. If your left palm itches you are going to pay money, if the right to receive it—

Rub it 'gainst wood,
'Tis sure to come good.

If your foot itches you will shortly walk upon strange ground; if your elbow you are going to sleep with a strange bedfellow. If your cheek burns some one is talking scandal about you; if your ear tingles you will hear sudden news. If you have a singing in your right ear some one is praising you; if in your left they are speaking ill of you. If your eye itches you will either cry or be kissed by a fool.

Many similar to these, all equally ridiculous, might be mentioned; not to be tedious, however, we will pass on to those things which are considered lucky and unlucky. It is lucky to find old iron, especially horseshoes, and if you preserve in the thrifty habit of accumulating these things you will some day become rich. Every one can understand that it is very unlucky to break a looking-glass, apart from the portent that it will entail seven years of trouble, but not poverty. As crickets bring luck to a house it is very unlucky to kill them; a strange black cat taking up her abode at the house will also bring luck to the inmates, and so will martins if they build under the eaves. It is lucky to find a spider on your clothes as it foretells you will receive money; but very unlucky to walk under a ladder—in this there seems to be a ray of reason. In no well-regulated households are feather beds allowed to be turned on a Sunday, because to do so is very unlucky. It is lucky to have your teeth grow wide apart, it also portends that you will be a traveller. It is lucky to have a mole on your back, for then you will have money by the sack; but very unlucky to have one at the hollow of the throat for then you will come to be hanged. Beliefs in lucky and unlucky days are still held, and many great men from Julius Cæsar to Napoleon and Prince Bismarck have deigned to hold this belief in veneration. Thursday was the unlucky day of Henry VIII., of his son Edward, and daughters Mary and Elizabeth; and it is remarkable they should all have died on that day. In some parts of England the day upon which the 14th of May falls is considered unlucky for the remainder of the year, and the young people will not marry nor will any one begin any important business on that day.

Persons who gamble are generally slaves to the superstition respecting lucky and unlucky numbers, and in countries where lotteries are still

permitted this credulity prevails to an amazing extent. This belief in lucky numbers represents a curious superstitious corner in the human mind, and to this day various devices are resorted to in hopes of hitting upon the lucky, that is, the winning, number in a lottery. In nearly every country there is some superstition about the luck in odd and even numbers; thirteen, for instance, is a very unlucky number. Very many people even now object to sit down to table with twelve others, the belief being that should they do so something dreadful will shortly happen to one of the number. It is very unlucky to accidentally spill the salt at table, though possibly the luck may be changed if you throw a pinch over your left shoulder. If the knives be accidentally crossed it foretells that there will be quarrelling.

There are numerous omens or warnings about death, dismal prognostications in which it is difficult to see the slightest sign of sense or reason. For instance, if a mouse squeak behind the bed of a sick person, it is a sure sign of death; so is the ticking of the beetle called the "Death Watch." If a humble bee flies into a room, it is a sign of death in the family; or if any bird flies into a room and out again by the open window, it betokens the death of one of the inmates. If a cow breaks into your garden there will be death in the house within six months. If a pigeon is seen sitting on a tree, or it enters the house, that is also a sign of death. If an owl screeches near the house, that is a sign of death; as is also a candle guttering into what has been called a "winding sheet." The howling of a dog betokens death.

There is also a curious belief in charms and incantations for the cure of sickness and pains; and the number of charms for the removal of warts is simply marvellous and their mysteries profound. This latter superstition seems to have taken good root and flourished exceedingly in the New World, for in that marvellous book by Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, Huckleberry Finn tells Tom how to cure warts by means of a dead cat. "You takes your cat to a churchyard in the dead o' the night, alone, to where a wicked man is buried, and just at midnight a devil will come, and when they are taking that feller away, you heave your cat after 'em and say, 'Devil follow corpse, cat follow devil, warts follow cat, I'm done with yer.' That'll fetch any warts."

We should be inclined to think it ought.

These superstitions, curious as they are, date back beyond the dawn of history, and it is impossible now to trace them to their source; their vitality is the most wonderful part about them. We are conscious that we have not nearly exhausted the list of marvels to be found in this little corner of folk-lore; our readers will doubtless be able to add many of these small superstitions for themselves. We have strung together a few which appeared to us worth noticing as being held in veneration in some part of the country at the present day.

There is much that is poetical in some of this folk-lore which will doubtless abide; but education is now giving to the people a more wholesome diet for their fancy to feed on, and the whole world is full of wonders that reveal the divine glory and goodness.

"FAINT HEART FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "*Meadowsweet*," "*A Lincolnshire Heroine*," &c.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR AND MRS. DESFORGES.

THE distinctions in Treminster were mapped out as clearly as streams in a delta. Treminster people moved in sets, and the set Lady Mary Footitt moved in was an old-fashioned one, yet most exclusive. Still Lady Mary was a good old soul, disposed for gossip with any garrulous old or young person, if they would only not endeavour to encroach upon her goodness. She would take a chair in the parlour of a Treminster tradesman and gossip there with the tradesman's wife as freely as with the wife of a minor canon in her drawing-room. Nor did she contrive to leave a tract or pamphlet on the chair cushion, having a diabolically fervent and impudent personal question for the heading. But Lady Mary was very poor, and made no secret of it. Happily reduced fortune, otherwise poverty, was not so great a crime in the eyes of the higher Treminster society as rebellion against social ordinances and the wishes of experienced guardians and parents. The Treminster people had a Debrett of their own. Not only were everyone's antecedents noted there, but likewise disposition and character. Character against the late Aubrey Aylmer had stood—detestable, bearish, unsociable. Tom was happy or unfortunate in inheriting the demerit attached to the stigma. As he never cultivated acquaintance with any of the circles which constituted society—which was foolish of him, considering that he had to make a practice and his way in the world, the embargo was never freely removed, consequently among all the sets lie was virtually tabooed. A few devoted friends stood his champion for awhile, but as he was careless of reaping the slight advantage, he remained a solitary, and society declared that the sentence of social ostracism passed upon the father must be accepted by the son. It was impossible for the bulky tome of Treminster judgment to record a single error.

Aylmer had not lived in this town so many years of his life without acquiring some knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of the men and women. The women were his great enemies. He smiled to himself when this criticism or that came to his ears, and laughed aloud when Desforges told him he would have to clap love to the ear of one of the belles if he wished to come to an armistice. Some who had passed their first youth would look over a few social defects, the blot on his scutcheon as registered in the aforesaid tome. The precentor's daughters were still unwed; they would have fifteen thousand apiece; their father had had the care of an old obsolete charity in his hands a number of years, a charity for which there was actually no recipients. The Wardlaws were well connected. Little Miss Vavasour, only child; old Vavasour could not last long. If he wished for money there were those new people come into the town with the impression that their *nouveaux*

riches would give them the *entrée* everywhere—how egregious was their vanity and ignorance; they had a daughter, if a giantess, worth her weight in metal most precious.

"Oh," said the doctor, "there is one other, her name I scarcely like to bring in, Edith, our dear Edith Heron; but then Lady Mary is desperately poor, and can give her nothing."

Aylmer smiled at every sentence prior to this, but now he became grave and serious and turned his face away, and the simple-hearted doctor imagined by that that the topic of marriage was distasteful to Aylmer.

"Take my nonsense at its worth, Aylmer. Only a medical practitioner should be a married man, letting alone the comfort there is in married life—he is looked upon with more confidence, and I don't wonder at that."

"I shall marry, doctor, some day, I hope," answered Tom. "To be honest I envy the young married folk I come in contact with, and I regard the old married people with the greatest respect; but then you know Desforges I believe in liking, mutual attachment, such old-fashioned ideas. Desforges, I am foolish enough to believe in love."

"Bravo!" cried Desforges; "Love!—now who would have thought it. Barely half a dozen of my acquaintance would give you credit for such romance. Well, the foolish people have always proved themselves the wisest. I won't say I shall be glad to dance at your wedding, Tom, for that is a savage custom; smacking of the South Sea, or the Dark Continent, Suttee, or some other diabolical paganism. But if you are in search of anyone to give the bride away, if you are only waiting for that—providing there is no father or brother—say the word, and I will go the length or breadth of the land, to John o' Groats, or the Lizard, to be at your service. Only now—don't throw yourself away."

"I had better run away than that," smiled Tom.

"For," resumed Desforges, "although you are or should be able now to take care of yourself, to a certain extent, I hold myself morally responsible for you, in that I promised your dear father to keep an eye upon you."

"I am sure I always count upon you as my best friend," said Tom.

"Then let Mrs. Desforges arrange matters—there is nothing she likes better—knock over all your prejudices. You shall have our acquaintance—*les jeunes filles* you know, and take your choice."

"What will the young ladies have to say to such an arrangement?"

"It is not necessary for them to be advised."

"Besides I should feel I was acting—well not a manly part—I might be the victim of a counterplot!"

"Pooh, we will guard against that. All those young ladies I have mentioned would jump at you I verily believe."

"I should not care for them all to be jumping at once," deprecated Tom in mock alarm. "For goodness sake, Desforges, breathe not a word of such a conversation as we have had if you love me, or my prospects will be blighted matrimonially and professionally. I am not a general favourite now, I should be cordially and deserv-

edly detested then—a male flirt!—a general lover!—What other opprobrious epithets should I not have launched at me? And I have an opinion that some of the young ladies are not open to offers."

"Oh, oh, then I am not well informed of topics current?—Is some one or are half a dozen fellows applying for licences? I must go down into the Bail and see if that rascally registrar has his board turned face to the wall. There is some iniquity about, I may rest assured. I must take my young lady friends to task, they pretend to consult me or Mrs. Desforges in every disease or tendency of the heart. In the confidence of them all—and to be treated like this! Tell me the news?" pleaded the doctor. Desforges was the greatest gossip Uphill, the delight of the ladies, a *bon virant*, a most genial and welcome guest at a dinner party, with stories racy and full of the grandest humour. It is little enough to assert that as a host he shone.

"Oh," said Tom, "it is very little of town talk that I am ever in possession of."

"Where there is smoke there is fire," observed the doctor, sapiently.

"Then the name is not yet apparent," answered Tom with an inflection, involuntary enough, but it caused the good old doctor to fancy that his young friend was hard hit.

"Now do tell Aylmer? Perhaps you called—are you hit, my boy, at last? Ah, then, let me congratulate you, I am delighted," said the impulsive Desforges, jumping to his feet as well as to conclusions—"and who is the happy fair one?"

"Not so fast, doctor. My dear Desforges you are very rash"—laughed Tom. "I have not hinted at such a *contretemps* that I am aware of, I assure you that I am still a bird of freedom." But Tom could not help a rueful sigh escaping him.

"There is some mystery in it all, a sigh—Shakespeare has something about a sigh, a lover's sigh. My better half is in the drawing-room, let us go to her, you will perhaps make her a confidant."

There was not another house in all Tremminster so beautiful as the doctor's. His wife's drawing-room was a bower of exquisite taste and chaste adornment. Pictures, if not of excessive value, choice and well balanced, furniture ornate without being showy, colours quietly blended, a careless yet accurate arrangement of knick-knacks, there were hundreds of small articles of bijouterie, bric-a-brac, but there did not seem a profusion. Exquisite bits of pottery, too, *objets d'art* from every land, European or Asiatic, from Zululand even. Some members of the doctor's family were rovers, and the wanderers always bore him in mind. The room was crowded, but it did not appear to be so, for nothing was ever in the way. Ferns and exotics gave to the room a balmy summer sense. The window upon the street was entirely screened with feathery plants, a pair of love birds suspended in their gilded cage might have imagined they had never left their native grotto. The small drawing-room was a kind of boudoir, a pianette standing in one recess, a chamber organ in another, and again flowers in another window, a French casement, flowers more gorgeous in hue, and again birds of bright plumage. The pale tint of the walls, the upholstery, the curtains shrouded in

muslin, here and there a splash of colour in a picture or a vase, or in the Chinese chessmen, gave depth and warmth. Mrs. Desforges sat busily engaged upon a rich design in woolwork intended for a forthcoming bazaar. As the day was drawing near, Mrs. Desforges felt herself bound to forego some of her calls in order to get her work completed in time. Her pleasure had almost become a task. She was a fair stout woman, never seen without spectacles.

"Now Philip," remonstrated she, "this is too vexing of you. You know I wished to keep this quite secret. No one knows what I am working. If you would only remember? Had you given me a hint I would have concealed my work. But, Mr. Aylmer," declared she, "it is always so with my husband, he is the most impulsive and inconsiderate man breathing."

"You said so, let me consider how many years it is ago," said the jocular doctor. "I forget the exact words, but when I seized your hand desperately, you said—bo—o—o—o; I cannot say what you did say, unless you take your hand away," remonstrated the doctor, in smothered tones.

"You are the most indiscreet man—I will not take it away unless you promise me to be more discreet. What will Mr. Aylmer care what I said or you did, so many years ago," exclaimed Mrs. Desforges, with well simulated indignation at such a breach of confidence. "It was all very foolish I have not a doubt."

"Just my very words, Aylmer," said Desforges, speaking through his wife's fingers. "I have been telling him, my dear, the so-called foolish people have always shown the greatest wisdom. It is time Aylmer was a benedict, and I wish you to find him a wife."

"As if I had stores, labelled and classified, like specimens in a case—young ladies stowed away like preserves in a closet. Now you are making fun of Mr. Aylmer, Philip, it is a shameful way of treating your friends."

"I intend looking upon him as an enemy so long as he continues single."

"Mr. Aylmer will not remain in single blessedness all his life," laughed she, "he is a man who positively ought to marry. Though he professes to hate parties and all that sort of thing, I shall not readily forget how fond my little nieces were of him. They wept the morning they went away because Mr. Aylmer was not here to wish them good-bye."

Tom Aylmer laughed; he remembered having sundry delightful games of romps with a couple of yellow-haired hoydens of seven and five respectively.

"In ten or twelve years time," said the doctor, counting upon his fingers, "if Aylmer continues single, and does not grow worse looking, we must have them here again. The ice is broken now—"

"If it had not been for Lady Mary," said Mrs. Desforges, ignoring her husband's nonsense, "I should have had Edith Heron return to Burghersh with them. But you know it would not do for Lady Mary to live alone. It would have been a good thing for the girls, Edith would have been company for their mother, and she would have found such a home. But of course I knew it was impossible. Edith relinquished a home for what she believed her duty. There is no question, Lady Mary was good to the child when she was

young. You know that wretch of a Heron squandered everything. Then when the child's legitimacy was disputed, her mother's small jointure a matter for a lawsuit, he had no funds for anything. Edith was robbed—yes, robbed. All Lady Mary could realize was swallowed up. And the idea, raising a question of her legitimacy—a child brought forward by the Captain to secure an interest in his wife's jointure! I don't think, with all his faults, the Captain was a man to descend to such a subterfuge. He maintained to the last she was his; he always treated her as if she was. Whatever his faults were he could not be taxed with want of affection for Edith, or he was a most artful hypocrite, and carried it out well afterwards when there was no need for simulation. How badly he did behave to Lady Mary, coming to live on her, behaving abominably to her, instead of being grateful for shelter if nothing more. The low acquaintances he made in the town, betting on horses, spending poor Lady Mary's money—I am sure she could ill spare any—it was said he was always bothering her for money. Of course you missed that wretched interlude, you were away then. I had no patience with Lady Mary, but she was always so good, she actually defended him, and waxed very wrathful when people spoke to her about her graceless nephew. He actually found fault with Lady Mary dressing the girl, said she made his child a perfect fright."

"Well," said Desforges, "I really think Heron might be right, the child walked about in old brocades made out of Lady Mary's grandmother's gowns."

"Oh, you unfeeling fellow, was not poor Lady Mary so straitened, even then she scarcely knew where to turn, every shilling was an object to her. Yet she managed to educate the child, and how well Edith did with it. I know the Verners were sorry to lose her. Then when that bank failed poor Lady Mary suffered again; don't we all know now that if she had not so many friends she could scarcely keep a house over her head? Edith, like a brave girl, is determined to work and help to keep the home together. But Mr. Aylmer, you cannot live and see nothing. I have no patience, I really have no patience with the Dean's wife."

"What will the Dean's wife care for that?" said her husband tantalizingly.

"I don't think she cares for anybody," returned Mrs. Desforges, aggrievedly. "She cannot really care for Edith Heron. So soon as Edith gets into her house, she commences a system of persecution, yes, nothing less. She has that young man, who has come in Dr. Olde's place, to give lessons to her children. She throws him in the way of Edith, she sends him into the school-room to take her music or books, and this young man has to escort her home. He is a nobody, I do not know what to make of such a mean insignificant little wretch. He is not good enough for Edith! Why, Philip, you said so yourself! I do not think he is so tall as she is; fancy having a husband to look down upon from the outset!"

"There is one thing satisfactory," said the doctor, "he will always have a high opinion of his wife, and look up to her."

But Mrs. Desforges shook her head unconvinced. She could scarcely realize how any one could be so jocular on such a topic—it was heart-rending.

"I would move heaven and earth to prevent it," said she.

"But if Edith is resigned?" queried the doctor mischievously.

"Oh, I can see how it all is," said Mrs. Desforges with an ominous shake of the head; "the Dean's wife has spoken to Lady Mary, and told her how much better it would be for Edith to be settled, or in a fair way for being settled. If anything should happen to Lady Mary, to have some one to protect Edith and look after her. Such rubbish! Why Edith has been able to take care of herself and look after others too—as if there was not another chance for the poor girl. Lady Mary coincides with this, the young man is mentioned, his irreproachable qualities, his submission, he carries himself as if he felt that for him it was a social lift and he promises to be a devoted husband. It is all rose-colour and Lady Mary is in one of her most pliable moods. Then Mrs. Pomfret opens her battery upon Edith, citing her aunt's good disposition towards the young man; at home Lady Mary tells her niece just what Mrs. Pomfret has told her, and harassed between the two Edith gives in. It is a persecution and the girl is a little daunted herself and feels her position. Mrs. Pomfret whispers that Dr. Olde will resign and their *protégé* have the first refusal. But you know Lady Mary is quite childish at times. I was out with her the other day, we met young Avellon's wife, I introduced her to Lady Mary as Mrs. Avellon. 'Why,' says Lady Mary, 'you aren't Avellon's mother?' Lady Mary was affronted because the bride laughed, I had to turn my head—Oh, that abominable woman to evolve such a scheme, no doubt she thinks it all very romantic—I think it very stupid. It has gone so far, however, you hear of the young man being at Lady Mary's every night. No, I have not anything against the man, he may be a very proper person, Dick Devensey says he is insufferable—"

"Dick," roared the doctor, "why is he a proper person? You really cannot cite him as an individual to rely upon at a crisis, or to speak after—the idle vagabond!"

"It is true Dick is an enemy," observed Aylmer with a laugh, a laugh which had no hearty ring in it. This was the first time he had spoken. Mrs. Desforges was at all times competent to take the lead in a conversation. "But with all Dick's shiftless ways," continued Aylmer defending him, "I do not believe there is anything mean or dis-honourable about him."

"And I like Dick," said the doctor, "if he is readier at play than at work. The rascal prefers shooting sparrows in my garden, to sitting in his father's surgery, I know. I like the fellow, his voice is summery, and would make one imagine a sun when one was upon dead reckoning."

"Dick told me he saw Edith looking very grave the other night," said Mrs. Desforges, "very anxious, and Lady Mary was very tiresome. It is all the fellow's music, you know what Edith is, that is the only point of sympathy between them. He will think it a great chance, and perhaps he thinks there will be money from somewhere someday; I haven't a doubt he imagines something will come by-and-by."

"Aylmer must be the *preux cavalier*, and carry her off," suggested the doctor. "He has an enchanted cave."

"I wish he would," said the lady.

"What could I do with a wife," said Tom assuming distress, "I haven't a home I could take a wife to. Do they not say, 'get a cage before you get a bird?' I could not carry the bird about with me in my pocket. This young fellow will marry Miss Heron, he will have a good salary, that will be something certain. I believe now I was foolish throwing up my certain income."

"Well," said Desforges, gravely, "Let us hope you did not do so foolish a thing as you imagine. I couldn't put anything in your way Tom, I scarcely dare venture to breathe your name. Our pact is terribly hard upon me. If we dissolve I have to suffer a couple of thousand pounds; I have five years yet. Devensey had everything made right for himself."

This was the only soreness the doctor had. He knew it was all right. He had signed with his eyes open. He did not wish it to be otherwise even. The bond rankled, because he would construe it, that he was a person not to be trusted, while he knew it was foolish to harbour such a thought. What if he knew he was the more skilful surgeon and physician, supposing there had been no bond, and he had been unprincipled, he might have broken with Devensey, and taken away a great share of the practice.

"It is my opinion," said the doctor, after Tom had gone, "Aylmer would not take much persuasion. I mean I don't think he would be indisposed to marry that girl. Did you not observe, my dear, how silent he was, how interested he was in what you had to say concerning her, and how guarded and delicate he was? Then he actually forgot himself so far as to talk about a cage. Now, was not that a favourable symptom. When a man begins to think about his poverty, he surely is in love or begins to wish he were."

"Fudge!" cried she; "if he were anything of a man he would carry her off out of hand. I shall begin to think with the rest of the people that there is nothing in him; that he is commonplace, and a bore. I am sure there is nothing of the hero in him. I shall soon detest him—there, Philip!"

"If that godmother of his were suddenly to give over breathing, and leave behind her for him ten, twenty, or thirty thousand pounds, you and all the women in Tremenister would declare he was a duck of a fellow; you would all discover points in him you had been blind to before. Lots of the married ones would bewail their bonds—"

"How little you know us! I tell you, Philip, Thomas Aylmer is stupid!"

"I don't know any man living, Jane, who is not; will that satisfy you? I don't know who that old woman has to leave her money to. She has a very short neck; she is very stout; she has to be lifted in and out her carriage, and an undertaking it is I can tell you. She must be a hundred at the least. Our people in Stonehshire know her. I believe they told me she lives the life of a solitary, and has neither chick nor child nearly related."

"You unfeeling wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Desforges, "to be calculating in so cold-blooded a way upon the death of a human being. You have no more delicacy than one of those horrid insurance offices."

"That comes of being a medical man, my darling—give me every allowance. In strict

justice, then, fat, uncomfortable people, very old people who have lots of money and their possible heirs none, should disgorge some of their plunder if they really mean to persist in living to an unconscionable age—say at sixty. If Tom were rich there would be more ogling for him than you will allow, I know. I believe he would soon marry if his pockets were well lined. That father of his made an awful mess allowing the old baronet to marry again. But for those boys, Tom need never have come back here. As it is, he is lord of a few sticks of furniture instead of several manors *in posse*; of a domicile sadly needing refurbishing, a skeleton or two—genuine, not cupboard ones, though I know he has them in a closet. He is a deuced good-looking fellow. I know if I were a girl I should be inclined—”

“ Well, well, you had better leave me, Philip. I don’t see so much beauty in the backward being—you have mixed all my wool—and I don’t care to hear such sophistry—nonsense, I mean. I can understand people being as they are or ought to be, but I fail to understand the theory of what they would be if they were different to what they are.”

“ Well, ungracious woman, here’s to Aylmer’s wedding,” retorted he, rising, chirping as he went out as hilariously as a boy, the opening bars of the “ Wedding March.”

(To be continued.)



THE MOON.

BY LEOPOLD WAGNER.

OF all the wondrous works of creation, not one has been so much discussed or investigated by man, as the moon. Scientists have made the most astounding discoveries concerning it; and fanciful authors have undertaken imaginative excursions thereto for the benefit of wonder-loving readers at home. And a most curious place the moon must be. Within a certain radius of its surface, as on that sphere itself, no terrestrial inhabitant could possibly exist. Nothing has life—vegetation is unknown—neither water nor atmosphere are traceable; a terrible stillness pervades the scene; all is barren, bleak, and charred—unmistakable signs of the utter combustion, which in ages past must have taken place. Thus much for a scientific view of the moon; a view which tends to disillusionize somewhat our nocturnal luminary. Nevertheless, the sentimental relations which the moon bears to the earth are not likely to wane through Time: they will remain enshrined in the hearts of men as long as our planet and its intelligent denizens shall exist. Like a solitary guardian of the City’s nightfall, whose lantern is ever to the fore; or, to use a less matter-of-fact simile, like the chaste virgin, whose oil is never wanting, whose lamp is ever brightly gleaming—the fair goddess of our heavens marks the vigil of each new-born day to the view of her worshippers everywhere. This vigil, too, she observes perpetually; the same Queen of Night that looked down upon the plains of Marathon illuminates the gory battle-fields of to-day; the same moon that witnesses the parting kiss of Tom and his sweet-

heart at the familiar street corner beheld also the loves of Abelard and Heloise; of Romeo and Juliet, and a thousand such clandestine meetings long, long ago. From time immemorial, the moon has figured as the especial patroness of poets, as of lovers. Name the scribe who has not indited a passionate ode to the moon! No theme has ever become more hackneyed, and so persistently employed as that which most readily presents itself to the eye during the happy hours of composition.

Some poets have derived their highest inspiration from the moon. This was particularly the case with the boy Chatterton, whose poetic lamp burned brightest under the moon’s soft light as it stole in upon him through his garret-window in Brook Street. Poor Collins, while in his asylum home, often delighted in lucid intervals of composition under the same conditions. Milton, too, declared that though he could not behold the moon, yet the fertility of his imagination at such times never failed to acquaint him with her celestial presence over his head. The weird conception of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Raven* was likewise largely indebted to his moonlight studies amid the stillness of the night. Prose authors have been no less stimulated by the moon. Nathaniel Hawthorne revelled in his nocturnal toil, assisted by the pale moonbeams streaming full upon him. “If the imaginative faculty refuses to act at such an hour,” he observes, “it might well be deemed a hopeless case. Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly, making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or moon-tide visibility, is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests. At such an hour, and with this scene before him, if a man sitting all alone cannot dream strange things, and make them look like truth, he need never try to write romances.” In such a situation, one might probably dream strange things indeed, nor boast of being impervious to spiritualistic fears—as like Hoffmann, who was wont to be so affrighted by the creations of his own imagination that he would drag his wife from her bed, and force her to sit beside him in her night-dress, holding an extra candle as he poured forth his weird stories. Of a truth, ghosts love the moonlight. It has been religiously asserted that the restless spirits of those who have not yet been called to their eternal goal hereafter, are temporarily assigned to wander upon the cheerless planet in the skies; and that they alone are permitted, under certain terms, “to walk the night,” as did the ghost of Hamlet’s father, to achieve some set purpose here below. Consequently their earthly visitations are always paid amid their especial element, viz., by moonlight. For who ever read or heard of a ghost story in which the moon did not play an important part; or what dismal graveyard ever harboured such a guest, save when the sombre moonbeams were directed full upon his awful personality!

The moon may even be cited in connection with the lower orders of creation. According to all received accounts, dogs are inveterate haters of the moon, and at night they violate the sanctity of the hour by barking or, as Shakespeare puts it, by “baying” loudly, at that silent orb. Cats, on the contrary, are particularly partial to the moon, delighting in nothing so much as to assemble in

countless numbers and with most melodious greeting on the housetops of peaceful citizens whose slumbers are often thereby rendered abortive. In this regard, the feline species strongly resemble the human, since their courtships are never held to be so sweet as when conducted by night and ratified by the moon. Tradition has it, also, that a cow once jumped over the moon; Mother Shipton, too, made a delightful excursion astride a broomstick in the same locality. Still adhering to legendary lore, the moon, as everybody knows, contains a solitary inhabitant of the male persuasion. What child has not been told of "the man in the moon," and traced in awful fancy those facial outlines which scientists inform us are no more than the extinct volcanoes which characterize its barren surface. Once more, the moon is generally addressed in the feminine; but it is a mistake to imagine that all nations adhere to this rule. As a matter of fact the moon is considered masculine in all the Teutonic languages. In the Scandinavian mythology, the son of Mundifori is Mâni (moon), and the daughter Sol (sun); so it is still with the Lithuanians and the Arabians, and so was it among the ancient Mexicans, the Slavi, and the Hindoos. The Anglo-Saxon etymology of the word moon is correctly "a measurer of time," and in respect of gender it is strictly masculine.

We might descant at length, did our space permit, upon the many old-time superstitions connected with the moon; as well as a few pleasant customs which still survive in the more remote parts of our land. Among the latter we particularly cherish that of claiming a kiss for a pair of gloves at the new moon. "The person in the company, male or female," remarks a contributor to "Hone's Every Day Book," "who first gets a glimpse of the new moon immediately kisses some member of the company, and pronounces, with a triumphant chuckle, 'Aha, Jane' (or as the name may be), 'there's a pair of gloves for me!'" The attractive powers of the moon in relation to the tides are familiar to all; side by side with the peculiar influence which it is said the planet exerts upon the minds of certain individuals at stated intervals. Such persons whose mental powers are thus temporarily deranged, were formerly known as "lunies" (maddened by the moon), from which the words "lunacy" and "lunatic," from *la lune*, the moon, have in modern days been introduced in our vocabulary. Lastly, it was the custom of the higher orders of the Teutons, a people who inhabited the western portions of Europe, to drink mead, or metheglin—a beverage made with honey—for thirty days after every wedding, whence "honeymoon." So much for the derivation of a term, the universal significance of which need scarcely be commented upon.



A NAMELESS HERO.

A SOLDIER forth to battle went
Not summoned by loud trumpets sound;
No fluttering pennons o'er him bent,
Nor drums with deafening roll resound.

No shield emblazoned guards his breast,
No herald's voice his name repeats,
No waving plumes adorn his crest,
No history tells his martial feats.

Untold his deeds—unknown his name
To all except the chosen few:—
Unwritten on the scrolls of fame—
His motto this—"To duty true."

He suffered woe, and want and pain,
The fever's heat, the ague's cold—
And ills the fell and numerous train
That fortune, fate and time unfold.

Unfaithful friends, and ruthless foes,
Bereavements, disappointments dire;
But mid the mass of human woes
Unquenched still burns his bosom's fire.

And with a courage nobly stern,
He met them with no craven fear;
But as the days and months return
New victories gained each rolling year.

He conquered self and vanquished sin,
Tamed passions fierce, temptations strong;
And foes without and foes within,
And conquest made o'er every wrong.

His battles fought—his duty done
He fell at length with victory crowned;
The struggle o'er—the conflict won,
His foes lie scattered all around.

Where rests this hero, nobly slain?
Is it in hallowed minster grand?
Where is his tomb—in stately fane?
In solemn temples of the land?

Sleeps he in marble pale and cold,
Where chiselled arches o'er him bend;
And floral wreaths in graceful fold,
With fluted columns proudly blend?

Is he to blank oblivion's shade
Consigned—to be for aye forgot
In Lethe's stream his memory laid
As if of man the common lot?

No! 'neath the yew tree's sombre gloom,
Mid verdant turf the wild flowers wave;
And with their sweet and fragrant bloom,
Bedeck this humble hero's grave.

And memories fond his name recall,
His virtues loving friends revere;
And on the silent dust let fall,
Full many a time the bitter tear.

Peace to his ashes! honour due!
May we like him the noble strife
Take up—the same bright course pursue,
Like him, attain the better life.

W. C. BLAKISTON.

MERMAIDS.

MERMAIDS have had their day and ceased to be. Our prosaic times were too much for them. We cannot tell whether it was the fiery snort of the steam-engine or the triumphal march of the schoolmaster that gave them the death-blow. We must rest content with the fact that they are no longer found in their favourite haunts. Even the rugged coast of the north-east of Scotland, which formed so long their happy hunting-ground—fishing-ground is the more correct term,—knows them not any more. I remember asking an old Northerner, who had a firm faith in ghosts and was not sure but the fairies still took moonlight rambles over his ground, if he had ever seen a mermaid. No, he had not, but his grandfather had. It seems that worthy was in the habit of treating himself to a morning dip at a certain promontory. One morning he was astonished to see a head crowned with long curling hair rising out of the water. The face was beautiful beyond description. It beguiled him for a second, but prudence made him take to his heels. When he got to a safe distance he looked again; only the graceful play of a tail marked the spot where the beautiful face had been. The seer of the strange sight often told what he had seen; and it was noted that the older he grew the face became more beautiful, the hair more golden, and the sweep of the tail more graceful. Perhaps, in his case, the distance of the years lent enchantment to the view, or the opinion of my informant may be correct: he thought that his father was better fitted in the wisdom of old age to appreciate the excellencies of the mermaid. The grandfather became a celebrity to the boys who gathered round his chair on the winter evenings to hear the oft-told tale. Not that such tales are by any means rare in that district, but it was something to see a man who had actually figured in one. That good fortune was denied me in my boyish days, but I had many opportunities of seeing places associated with the fair maids of the sea. One such place I remember well. It was a rock at some little distance from the shore, but accessible at low water. It bore the suggestive name of "The Mermaid's Rock." Of course, thereby hangs a tale. Long ago—how long ago the trustworthy chroniclers of the fireside hesitate to say—there lived a young man who, like many young men of the present day, longed to be rich. The slow returns of farming, and the chance profits of fishing, seemed quite unlikely to bring him what he wanted. Dreaming and desiring were still more unlikely. Only one way of getting gold could be seen. It was firmly believed by him and his neighbours that a mermaid bathed every morning at the rock I have already spoken of, and that having performed her ablutions, like Mirza of old, she was in the habit of meditating. These meditative moments were also active moments, for she combed her hair carefully then. Whoever managed to catch her while thus engaged could have any wish gratified. The gold-seeker resolved to catch her, and make her supply him with what he wanted. He rose early one morning, and stole down to the sandy beach overlooking the rock, but no mermaid! A second and a third morning brought no better luck, but on the fourth he

caught a glimpse of the golden tresses which to him meant golden spoil. There she was beyond doubt, probably meditating, certainly combing her hair. He gently slipped down to the level of the rock. Fortunately the tide was out. He had no difficulty in moving softly over the sand till the rock was reached. A bound, and the mermaid was locked in his strong grasp. She asked him what he wanted. He told her. Now it happened that he was a good-looking fellow. His captive was at once smitten with his charms. From which interested students of mermaid lore may draw the inference that maids of the sea are no more impervious to the attractions of the other sex than their sisters on land. She was equal to the occasion. If she granted his request, she would lose a possible lover. There was a way of humouring him and pleasing herself. She told him of her home under the sea, where gold was used as paving-stones, and diamonds were as plentiful as the weed that lay on the beach. Would he come with her and become the master of such wealth? He was quite willing. So together they plunged down, and together they sank into the depths—down, down, till they came to a palatial mansion. This they entered. The rustic found he had not been deceived about the gold. It was there in abundance. He could lift it, toy with it, and call himself owner of it. But if he was master of the gold, he soon found that he was the servant of her who brought him to it. She was so jealous of him that she could hardly let him out of her sight. He was her property; no other mermaid was allowed to speak to him, nor he to her. This constant watchfulness worried him, and after a time the magnificence began to pall. He longed for his old companions and former pleasures. At last he formed the daring resolution to escape to the upper world, carrying with him as much gold and silver as he could. Fortune favours the brave. His devoted mermaid had to visit some aunts one day, and that day he chose for his meditated flight. As soon as she had gone, he hastily gathered some jewels and gold, and then sprang out into the sea to swim upwards. All went well for ten minutes; then he heard sounds which betokened pursuit. He was strong, and swam for dear life. He trembled to think of his fate should he fall into the hands of his infuriated spouse. Some anxious seconds, and the surface of the sea is gained. The well-known rock towers before him, and in the background the familiar beach. Only let him reach the rock and he is safe. But alas! angry sounds and swift strokes behind him tell that his pursuers—not one, but a company of mermaids—are gaining on him. He swims as only a man swimming for life can, but in vain. He is overtaken and overpowered. He knew he could hope for no mercy, and he got none. He was carried to the rock, and bound with gold chains to it. The tide rolled in round him, higher and higher, till he was drowned. Such was the punishment with which the mermaid visited her faithless lover. There was in it a fine touch of poetic justice. Gold had led him astray, and gold fastened him to the death of the cruel waves. That is the story of "The Mermaid's Rock."

Let me now say something definite about mermaids. The word comes from the Anglo-Saxon terms *mere*, a lake, and *moegd*, a maid; where the

idea comes from I cannot tell.* Probably it comes from a version of the Apsaras legend suited to northern minds and tastes. The Apsaras legend took its rise among the ancient Indians. They, looking up at their blue sky over which careered the white cirrus clouds, thought these clouds resembled swans gliding over a peaceful lake. Under the influence of this conception they indulged in personifications; their fertile fancy incarnated the beautiful clouds, which must be some messengers of heaven, into swan-maidens clothed in feathers of shimmering sheen, whose work it was to float in the pure atmosphere above, and there receive to rest the souls of heroes who had done noble deeds on earth. Sometimes they condescended, it was thought, to dwell among men, and even become their wives; but that was always but for a little time. Wearied of the dull earth and the dullest husbands they soon winged their way upwards again. While below they were half bird and half female. The legend may have travelled northwards, and there the seaside imagination may have dowered the heavenly visitant with a woman's head and a fish's tail.

Some would have us believe in a different origin of the myth. They tell us that the appearance of seals, walruses, and, perhaps still more, the herbivorous cetacea so wrought on the excitable minds of our forefathers that they conjured up such creatures as the mermaids are represented to have been. A relic of this belief is to be found in the name "Mermaid's Glove" (*Halichondria Palmata*), given to the large sponge so common in British seas. Whatever the explanation, let the fact suffice. Once there were maids on the lakes and in the sea widely different from those who dwelt on land. Sometimes they took the shape of swans; at other times, and more frequently, they were like women above and fishes below the waist. They often appeared to mortals. Occasionally they took to washing or beating clothes; but that was always an omen of disaster to those who saw them. They had great power. They could unveil the future. They could grant the wish of anybody who won or forced their favour. Thus we read of the Cromarty shipmaster who had wishes three—that neither he nor any of his friends should come to grief by sea, that he should succeed in everything he did, and that the lady he loved in vain should give an attentive ear to his suit. The mermaid granted his three wishes, and they became realities. One might think from this that mermaids were very useful. They were occasionally, but not always. Sometimes they wrought much mischief. Should any person come under their wrath his fate was awful indeed.

The curious conception of mermaids is not confined to one country. On the contrary, it is general. The American Indians have a man-fish and a woman-fish. The Chinese seas contain sea-women, though no foreigner, so far as I know, has come across them. The tritons and sirens of antiquity are familiar to all readers of the classics. Teutonic legends and Scandinavian saga abound in references to strange deeds done by maidens clothed in feathery dresses or scaly fins.

D. SUTHERLAND.

* A very interesting account of the mermaid myth is given in Baring Gould's "Myths of the Middle Ages."

MY TWIN-BROTHER RICHARD.

BY J. HARCOURT BOE.

CHAPTER I.

MISS JONES.

I WAS twenty-seven years of age, tall, strong, muscular, well-built, and good-looking. I was fairly off—for a clerk—and in the best of health, and yet I was not happy. Wherefore?

Because I had a brother—a twin-brother—as like me as two peas, who was also tall, strong, muscular, well-built, and good-looking; and I do think it was a very hard thing. Why, without him I should have been unique, unparalleled, but with him I became simply one of a number. For what the general public knew to the contrary, there might have been any amount of brothers all cast in the same mould.

It cannot be denied that he was *exactly* like me in appearance; with sorrow I admit that no one would have known us apart.

But there the resemblance ends; for while he is commonplace, trivial, inferior, I am lofty in conception, profound in idea, full of genius, which one day must raise me to fame. Even before this story is finished, I feel sure my readers will come to *that* conclusion. Notwithstanding, I strongly sympathize with that little boy who exclaimed, "I wish I had a brother!" and when asked the reason, replied, "Because I could fight him."

Oh, how often and fervently I have wished that I could find cause to fight *my* brother, and knock his face out of all resemblance to mine; but whereas I, with my finely strung mind and nerves, could often find occasion for a quarrel, he, with that dense stupidity belonging to inferior natures, has only laughed away the cause, saying with an amiability for which I longed to thrash him—

"In one of your tantrums again, old fellow?"

I certainly should have attempted it, but for the awful fear that perhaps he, too, might spoil my beauty, in which case I should be more like him than ever. Think what a spectacle, twins each with broken noses would have been! I shudder to think of it.

We came up together from the country to reside in London, both having obtained situations in the same counting-house. But, will it be believed, whereas we were both on the same footing when we entered, before six months were over he was raised above me, *me*, with my talent, just because the grovelling mind of our chief had discovered that he wrote a neater hand, and had more plodding industry. Why any child can make letters like the first lessons in writing; it is the flowing, free scrawl, which is the mark of strong character; and as for punctuality, and so on, I despise it. Are we not told that "Britons ever shall be free?" Of course we are, and therefore it is only base carneying minds who think it a merit to be in their offices as the clock strikes nine. For myself, I can enter at a liberal ten or eleven with the greatest equanimity, quite unruffled by the vigorous and ungentlemanly language to which I am compelled to listen in consequence from my superior; my official superior, please to notice.

We took lodgings in one of the suburbs, very much against my wish. I would have improved

my mind by frequenting every place of amusement in town, for which purpose residence in London itself was absolutely necessary, but my brother, with his usual pig-headedness, capped every argument of mine with the ridiculous and mean remark, "We cannot afford it, old boy; I wish we could," and actually wrote down an absurd statement of our income and our imperative payments.

So as I was forced, with my usual magnanimity, to give in at last, I insisted that I should choose both the suburb and the lodgings, provided—(Richard would make this low condition, so repulsive to my liberal ideas)—that they did not exceed a certain price.

I selected a locality some six miles from Charing Cross, one of our great railway junctions, near which there is a huge cemetery.

I was shown three rooms in a small terrace. The back-yards of the houses adjoined the cemetery, the front gardens were adjacent to a rifle range, beyond this was the line of railway.

Richard, out of sheer obstinacy and simply to annoy me, strongly objected to these lodgings. I triumphantly overcame every expostulation.

"What," I said, "could be more convenient? If we are shot in front when the volunteers are firing, we can be carried out at the back straight into the cemetery to be buried."

This argument was unanswerable.

He next complained that his bedroom was small and his window so near the graveyard that he could read all the inscriptions on the tombstones.

"And what," I asked in severe tones, "could be more improving to a frivolous young man like you? Think of the influence it will have on your religious principles, which, I fear, are sadly wanting."

"Why don't you go to the back then, and let me have the large front bedroom which you have already appropriated?" he retorted.

To this I replied sadly, "Richard, I grieve for you. Is your physical comfort of such importance to you that you should wish to lose this unrivalled opportunity for giving a dark and sombre tone to your moral feelings."

"Well," he returned, with his usual provoking laugh which some people call cheery, "it's the first time I have ever heard that it is an advantage for one's morality to be shady. It will perhaps improve my character also to sleep on that precious hard mattress and narrow bedstead, while you are luxuriating in that comfortable bed in front and contemplating all the best furniture. But, dear me, settle it how you please, old boy; I can splash while I am in my tub as much as I please, for the very good reason that there is no carpet to injure except a small strip, while you will have to be careful, with that tapestry all over the room."

I forbore to reply. As if it were likely that I should take a cold bath of a day, with the winter coming on! He next objected to the landlady; said she had not an honest countenance, and did not look clean.

"Richard," I exclaimed, "is it possible that you can be so selfish? Do you not know that it is my intention to compose? How can any author write except he have models to draw from? Shall I not limn her to the life? I will depict her stealing our cold mutton, or tasting our brandy, in a manner that shall cause England to ring with my name. I shall be sought after so that pub-

lishers will beseech me in vain to write for them. My graphic sketches will be reproduced in every known language."

He shrugged his shoulders and laughed. I told the landlady we would come the next day, and we did so.

As she never knew either of us apart, do what she would, she addressed us both as "Mr. Smith." It was most annoying. I in vain said to her, "I am Mr. Smith—that is Mr. Richard." It was of no avail.

Shortly after our residence on the borders of the graves commenced, we became acquainted with a Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and their only daughter, who was a fine well-grown girl, with apple cheeks, blue eyes, and fuzzy red hair. After a little time I knew that I loved her. Oh, embodied rapture of frenzy, thy name is Reginald Smith!

In my own mind I called her my living Rubens, my animate Venus. When I became certain of the unalterable nature of my affections, I insisted that my brother should always wear a black necktie and I a red one when visiting at the house, in order that I might never be mistaken for him. But, with the usual perversity of human nature, from the moment that she knew us apart—owing to our neckties—she addressed all her conversation to him, made eyes at him, and I, her admirer, was left out in the cold, or would have been but for the fact that he never returned her glances, and seemed—carnal being!—to prefer his supper to her attentions.

She said he talked sense and I talked nonsense, I who conversed on the ethics of the universe!

There came a time when my jealousy could no longer be contained. I approached my brother when he was sauntering by the cemetery, and brought his baseness home to him.

"Vile usurper!" I exclaimed; "dost thou dare to rush on where creatures of an angelic order fear to tread?"

"Draw it mild!" was his vulgar rejoinder. "I am not a fool and you are not an angel."

I gave him a withering glance and left him. I ran to the nearest draper's and expended a whole week's salary on a gorgeous red necktie, with which I arrayed myself. As I looked in the glass I felt myself irresistible. I went to Mr. Jones's. Fortune favoured me for Miss Jones was alone in the drawing-room.

With a reckless disregard to the knees of my best trousers, I knelt before her saying—

"I love thee muchly, say, wilt thou be mine?" To my horror she burst out laughing.

I recoiled in amaze.

"Speak, loved one, and seal my fate!" I exclaimed.

"Then I won't be yours," she returned still laughing.

I tore my hair, I raved, I implored. From my richly stored mind I quoted poetry. In vain.

"Oh, do leave off bothering!" she exclaimed at last. "I will have nothing to do with such a fool."

I rushed from the house; I stayed away a fortnight. Then flesh and blood could stand it no longer, and I returned to the presence of the enchantress. I renewed my entreaties but with the same result. Finding she could not induce me to leave her presence she consented to a compromise; she would be my friend.

"My more than friend," I rejoined, "my sister. But, to quote the words of Tennyson—

Who that ever had a sister,
Felt his heart beat when he kissed her?"

"Tennyson!" she said scornfully. "Tennyson, indeed; and do you suppose for a moment that I am going to let you kiss me?"

"As to Tennyson I may be mistaken;" I rejoined, "with my deep reading perhaps I sometimes confuse my authors, but why shouldn't I kiss you?" and I approached her.

She armed herself with a garden fork, before which I fled, fled precipitately. As I was leaving the garden she called after me, "You are not to come back unless you bring your brother with you."

This was the last straw; I resolved I would not come back, I would not bring my brother.

CHAPTER II.

I KEPT to my resolution during three whole days, three long weary days. And then I argued thus: Who is benefited by my enforced absence? No one.

Who is injured by it?

Miss Jones, most decidedly, Miss Jones. Without the incalculable advantage of listening to my flowers of rhetoric will not her mind droop and wither? Why should I then inflict this wrong on the being I adore? Far be it from me to do so. I will return to her feeling sure that these long days of absence will have caused her to estimate me at my true worth.

But, as there was no knowing whether she might not again have recourse to the garden fork were I to return alone (and think what a glorious picture would be marred in the eyes of the world were my handsome countenance disfigured) I resolved—simply in order to gratify other people by the continuance of my beauty—to take my brother also.

The insensate wretch at first refused the invitation. "I don't care for those Jones's," he said, rudely, "and I can't possibly go to-night, for I have an engagement," and with his usual obstinacy and disgusting selfishness (I abhor selfishness) he insisted on keeping it, whilst I spent a solitary evening.

But the next morning I was firm.

"Richard," I said, "you will agree to call on Mr. and Mrs. Jones" (I emphasized these words by way of delicately reproving him for his flippancy in speaking of them as "those Jones's") "or you will go out of this gate OVER MY DEAD BODY."

His coarseness was such that he actually roared with laughing.

"Go over your dead body, my dear boy? Not if I know it."

"You will then accompany me now," I rejoined with dignity.

"Oh, all right," he replied with another aggravating laugh for which I wonder—yes, when I calmly reflect on it, I wonder—I did not pull his nose. I certainly should have done so had I not thought he would have retaliated hotly, and I wished to spare him the pain and remorse of injuring his only brother.

Miss Jones was in the garden; when she perceived us she plucked a late winter rose and handed it to my brother. He put it in his button-

hole and fastened it with a pin. My eyes flashed fire; nothing but the goodness of my heart prevented me from murdering him.

After a few moments had elapsed we found we must go as our train was due. I maintained a solemn silence and did not answer when my brother spoke to me.

"What is the matter, old fellow?" he asked as we seated ourselves side by side in a second-class carriage.

I pointed majestically to the flower in his button-hole with a gesture worthy of Macready.

"Oh, is that it?" he replied; "well you may have it."

Joy overspread my countenance as he unpinned the rose and tossed it carelessly to me.

"Oh, rose! oh, fairest emblem —"

I should probably have continued my blank verse had not a city man, a huge coarse city man, entered the carriage, and I refrained from casting my pearls.

I tenderly placed the flower in my button-hole, fastening it with the identical pin that had been in HER fingers.

We had barely started when crash, bang, crash, and chaos ensued. * * *

I opened my eyes within four walls. Where was I? What had happened? What lovely form was this bending over me? "Tis she!" I should have exclaimed with rapture, but for the remembrance of a song not wholly unconnected with a sailor sighing, in which the performers "Tis she" to such an extent that it reminds one of a spasmodic sneeze. Therefore I said instead, "It's her."

But my low tones had not been heard. She bent over me, exclaiming, "Richard, oh, Richard, darling!"

Good heavens! She thought I was my brother, my inferior brother! And, what was worse, she loved him. With the ready wit of which only a truly great mind can avail himself I thought of a brilliant plan. I would be my brother. Henceforth I would personate Richard in the eyes of Sophonisba Jones, much as I despised him.

My cheeks felt very painful; I put up my hand and felt the blood running from them, while Sophonisba, in tears, was mopping it up with her clean handkerchief.

"How did I come here, dearest?" I ejaculated faintly. I have omitted to observe that the tones of our voices are identical; but at the word "dearest," she looked at me.

"Surely you are Richard, to whom I gave the rose," she said sharply.

"Surely I am," I replied.

"But Richard had a black necktie," she retorted suspiciously.

"It is the gore from my wounded face that has dyed it red," I replied; and in order to prevent further inspection, I wrenchet it off and threw it in the fire, saying, "Avant, vile garment."

"I never heard you talk like that before," she returned; "it is only that fool of a brother of yours who uses such ridiculous language."

I dissembled my indignation, for she had caused a new idea to enter my head; I saw I must guard and restrain my words, so as to bring my conversation down to the level of my commonplace brother.

"Tell me what has happened," I said.

"There has been a slight railway accident, and you became senseless from the shock, and were carried in here, as our house is so close to the line. I do not think, though, that you are much hurt. I wonder where your brother is."

Shall I confess it? For a moment a hope crossed my mind that he might have been killed; *not* in order to be finally out of my way—oh reader! do not thus misjudge me—but that he might be spared the further sorrows of this unhappy world; and my forethought with regard to the choice of lodgings striking me, I reflected how short a distance there would be to the cemetery, and that I should be spared the expense of a hearse and carriage. It was no sordid spirit that actuated me; it was the knowledge of how much my brother in his lifetime had deprecated unnecessary expenditure, and in every respect I would revere his wishes. While I was considering whether a hatband and gloves would be necessary, and had decided in favour of gloves as being useful afterwards, in he walked, looking the picture of health, and exclaiming, "Why, my dear old boy, how thankful I am to see you alive! I feared the worst when I was told you were carried here." And he shook my hand as if he would wring it off.

"I never gave you credit for so much feeling, Mr. Smith," said Sophonisba; and fearing that she would address me as Richard, I begged her to leave the room so that I might speak to my brother alone.

I then in impressive words told him of the state of the case, and adjured him to answer to the name of Reginald when addressed.

"I know," I said, "what a gigantic effort will be required on your part to bring your mind up in order even feebly to personate me, but for my sake do it. Read Shakespeare, read Byron, and bring as many poetical ideas into your usually poor conversation as you are able. I, on the contrary, will endeavour to keep silence as much as possible, that my lofty intellect may not betray itself unawares.

The brute again roared with laughter, and replied—

"I will do nothing of the sort."

I pointed out to him the wisdom of the course I had suggested, but it was not until I had argued and expostulated, and finally abjectly entreated, representing that my whole prospects would be ruined unless he consented, that he would agree not to expose me. It was just like his selfishness, and, as I said, I abhor selfishness.

"Well," he said at last, reluctantly, "I think you are a great fool; but I suppose I must give way to you. But I will not stay here and make a fool of *myself*. Our senior partner has often asked me to stay with him, and hitherto I have refused, thinking it would vex you were I to go, as you had no invitation. But I will now offer myself as a visitor."

I thought to myself what an idiot that senior partner must be not to perceive my superior merit; but all I said was—

"Go; go, heartless wretch, and leave your wounded, maimed, disfigured brother."

"Well, you know, old boy," he returned, "if you are going to be me I advise you to drop that; it won't go down with Miss J.: she'll spot you in a jiffy."

Vulgar creature that he was! At this moment she re-entered, and looked at us both.

"I thought, Mr. Smith," she said, addressing my brother, "that you wore a red necktie?"

"And so he did," I replied hastily for him, "but on hearing I was killed in the train, he quickly removed his gay necktie, a gentleman in the train, touched with pity, offered him a black one in its place, in order that he might at once go into mourning for me. He has just told me the anecdote. the kindness of his fellow-traveller having brought tears into his eyes."

I saw Richard's shoulders shaking as I spoke. I sternly motioned him to leave the room.

"You are Richard?" said Sophonisba as he departed.

"Of course I am Richard," I replied, and closing my eyes feigned sleep.

She approached me softly, and leaning over me imprinted a soft kiss on my forehead.

Oh, the rapture of that moment. My soul expanded within me until I thought my bosom would have burst in the effort I made to restrain my ardent words, but with the courage of a martyr I did so, and, the remembrance of my odious brother strong in my mind, I only clasped her in my arms and said, as I know he would have done—

"Now I have caught you."

She blushed the colour of her hair—flame colour—as she replied—

"Let me go, Mr. Richard."

"No," I said firmly, "not till you have promised to marry me."

With eagerness and delight she exclaimed, "Of course I will." I kissed her twenty times, and then released her.

"I must tell pa and ma," she said, and left the room.

In came Jones père, looking, as usual, as if his fat cheeks would burst his skin; in came Jones mère, her goggle eyes staring. They shook hands with me, and said, "And so you are going to marry our Sophie?" Jones mère adding, "And right glad I am it is you, and not your stuck-up brother, whom I can't bear."

I have not hitherto mentioned that Jones père had been a greengrocer, and retired on his fortune, a slice of which I naturally counted on with my Sophonisba. His next words dispelled this illusion:

"My girl is as good as gold, though she has a bit of a temper; but you won't get any money, bear that in mind, young man."

I did bear it in mind. I bore it in mind as much as he could possibly have wished. Not on my account. I would have faced privation manfully, but the thought that my loved one might be exposed to it almost caused me to withdraw my words. I did not do so, however, again remembering what would have been my odious brother's course of action. The next few weeks passed slowly. I remained in the Jones's house; my brother—callous monster!—being still away at the house of our senior partner. I could not but picture to myself the luxury he was enjoying while listening to the gilded conversation of our partner's daughter, a lovely creature, worth literally any money. I thought of the fine company there would be in the house, and I wearied of the society of Jones père and his perpetual talk of swedes.

But this was as nothing compared with the torments I endured in suppressing my noble aspirations and bringing my mind down to personate my stupid brother. Sometimes I thought the effort would be too much for me, and that I should expire from suppressed emotion.

I was now well, but there remained a large scar on each cheek, the only consolation for which was that never again could I be mistaken for Richard. "But oh!" I thought, "that he had been the one marked, and not I. What sympathy he would have received, and what advantage to his moral nature in keeping down his conceit!"

The wedding-day was fixed; it seemed to me very much hurried, but still I was eager to call Sophonisba my own, and end the state of restraint in which I was living. Once or twice I had seen her looking at me curiously, but she made no remark, and I thought she suspected nothing.

The day of our marriage opened brightly. My brother came down early, his face beaming, and informed me that he was going to be married soon himself to our partner's daughter, who would receive a large sum of money on her wedding-day; while as for himself, it had been more than hinted at that if he continued to give satisfaction he would be raised eventually to a junior partnership.

My sympathy caused me to turn pale and grind my teeth (it was a mere nervous ebullition expressive of amiable rejoicing).

The ceremony commenced. My bride looked lovely, her countenance and hair a perfect harmony in crimson gorgeous to behold. Jones *père* swelled and Jones *mère* goggled more than ever, to the evident amusement of the vulgar congregation.

As I had to respond, I feared I should be discovered, and the service abruptly stopped, which would have been a terrible blow to my self-respect. Therefore I managed to mumble Reginald in such a manner that it sounded like Richard, and looking round I caught my brother looking at me with a positively fierce expression. Could he have been so exceptionally ridiculous as to have imagined I should have told them my real name!

While the books were being signed in the vestry I adroitly caused every one to look the other way by a false alarm of smoke and fire in the church, and I scrawled my name more unintelligibly than ever.

But when we had returned to the house, and I was alone with my bride, my long pent-up transports flowed forth. I knelt before the vision of loveliness that she presented, exclaiming—

"Thou art mine at last my angel; oh, muchly is no word for how I love thee."

I should have continued in this strain for an hour, had she not turned to me in a fury, and exclaimed—

"You are Reginald!" and taking up the poker she advanced.

I hastily barricaded myself with footstools, and got under the sofa, attempting in vain to address her. She stamped, she raved, she called me every bad name in her vocabulary, and finally she ordered me to come forth like the coward I was.

"I am not a coward," I returned with dignified sorrow; "I simply retired under the sofa in order that you might not have to reproach yourself in after-days with having injured me."

She gave me a slap on the face which made me reel, and then said, "As we are married, you pitiful sneaking fool, I suppose I must make the best, of you. But I will expose you before the whole of the guests unless you now swear to me that my will shall be law, and that you give me every shilling of your money as soon as you receive it."

I expostulated in vain; she was like a rock.

I would have died sooner than submit to such debasing conditions as far as I personally was concerned, but I reflected on the disgrace the exposure would shed on my brother through me. How could I tell but that it might even lead to the ruin of his prospects through the breaking off of his engagement; so with a heavy heart, and solely on his account, I swore I would do as she wished, the guests coming in at the door ere the words were well out of my mouth, and shrieking with laughter as they saw me on my knees where she had forced me. Of the wedding breakfast I can give no account; it is to me a blank. I cannot remember what took place, but at its conclusion Jones *père* took me aside and said, "I wouldn't damp your spirits, my boy, by mentioning it before; but we have lost every stiver of my money"—on my honour he said *stiver*—"and must now come and live with you and Sofie."

Was there ever such a fate as mine? And yet I knew I could not dissent. Over my home life I will draw a veil. I will not describe how I am badgered and chivied and bullied. The only comfort I enjoy is when my brother (who is now married), with all the purse-proud ostentation of the *nouveaux riches*, gives me a five-pound note when my wife is out of the room, and says, with a disgusting parade and affectation of regard, "Take this for my sake, old man."

I would indignantly reject it, but that with my unvarying goodness I consider it might offend him.

I have but one consolation: it is that POSTERITY will recompense me, although I now live unknown and unnoticed. I feel sure that when the names of Shakespeare and Milton are all but forgotten, that of the immortal genius, Reginald Smith, will live in every heart and be on every tongue.

IDLÉ THOUGHTS.

BY AN IDLÉ FELLOW.

ON DRESS AND DEPORTMFNT.

THEY say—people who ought to be ashamed of themselves do—that the consciousness of being well dressed imparts a blissfulness to the human heart that religion is powerless to bestow. I am afraid these cynical persons are sometimes correct. I know that when I was a very young man (many, many years ago, as the story-books say), and wanted cheering up, I used to go and dress myself in all my best clothes. If I had been annoyed in any manner, if my washerwoman had discharged me, for instance; or my blank verse poem had been returned for the tenth time, with the editor's compliments, "and regrets that owing to want of space he is unable to avail himself of

kind offer;" or I had been snubbed by the woman I loved as man never loved before.—By the way, it's really extraordinary what a variety of ways of loving there must be. We all do it as it was never done before. I don't know how our great-grandchildren will manage. They will have to do it on their heads by their time, if they persist in not clashing with any previous method.

Well, as I was saying, when these unpleasant sorts of things happened, and I felt crushed, I put on all my best clothes, and went out. It brought back my vanishing self-esteem. In a glossy new hat, and a pair of trousers with a fold down the front (carefully preserved by keeping them under the bed—I don't mean on the floor, you know; between the bed and the mattress) I felt I was somebody, and that there were other washerwomen: aye, and even other girls to love, and who would perhaps appreciate a clever, good-looking young fellow. *I didn't care: that was my reckless way.* I would make love to other maidens. I felt that in those clothes I could do it.

They have a wonderful deal to do with courting—clothes have. It is half the battle. At all events, the young man thinks so, and it generally takes him a couple of hours to get himself up for the occasion. His first half-hour is occupied in trying to decide whether to wear his light suit with a cane and a drab billycock, or his black tails with a chimney-pot hat and his new umbrella. He is sure to be unfortunate in either decision. If he wears his light suit and takes the stick, it comes on to rain, and he reaches the house in a damp and muddy condition, and spends the evening trying to hide his boots. If, on the other hand, he decides in favour of the top hat and umbrella—nobody would ever dream of going out in a top hat *without* an umbrella: it would be like letting Baby (bless it) toddle out without its nurse. How I do hate a top hat! One lasts me a very long while, I can tell you. I only wear it when—well, never mind when I wear it. It lasts me a very long while. I've had my present one five years. It was rather old-fashioned last summer, but the shape has come round again now, and I look quite stylish.

But to return to our young man and his courting. If he starts off with the top hat and umbrella, the afternoon turns out fearfully hot, and the perspiration takes all the soap out of his moustache, and converts the beautifully-arranged curl over his forehead into a limp wisp, resembling a lump of seaweed. The Fates are never favourable to the poor wretch. If he does by any chance reach the door in proper condition, she has gone out with her cousin, and won't be back till late.

How a young lover, made ridiculous by the gawkiness of modern costume, must envy the picturesque gallants of seventy years ago. Look at them (on the Christmas cards), with their curly hair and natty hats, their well-shaped legs encased in smalls, their dainty Hessian boots, their ruffling frills, their canes, and dangling seals. No wonder the little maiden in the big poke bonnet and the light blue sash, casts down her eyes, and is completely won. Men could win hearts in clothes like that. But what can you expect from baggy trousers and a monkey jacket?

Clothes have more effect upon us than we imagine. Our deportment depends upon our dress. Make a man get into seedy, worn-out rags,

and he will skulk along with his head hanging down, like a man going out to fetch his own supper beer. But deck out the same article in gorgeous raiment and fine linen, and he will strut down the main thoroughfare, swinging his cane and looking at the girls, as perky as a bantam cock.

Clothes alter our very nature. A man could not help being fierce and daring with a plume in his bonnet, a dagger in his belt, and a lot of puffy white things all down his sleeves. But, in an ulster, he wants to get behind a lamp-post and call police.

I am quite ready to admit that you can find sterling merit, honest worth, deep affection, and all such like virtues of the roast-beef and plum-pudding school, as much, and perhaps more, under broad-cloth and tweed as ever existed beneath silk and velvet; but the spirit of that knightly chivalry, that "rode a tilt for lady's love," and "fought for lady's smiles," needs the clatter of steel and the rustle of plumes to summon it from its grave between the dusty folds of tapestry and underneath the musty leaves of mouldering chronicles.

The world must be getting old, I think; it dresses so very soberly now. We have been through the infant period of humanity, when we used to run about with nothing on but a long, loose robe, and liked to have our feet bare. And then came the rough, barbaric age, the boyhood of our race. We didn't care what we wore then, but thought it nice to tattoo ourselves all over, and we never did our hair. And, after that, the world grew into a young man, and became foppish. It decked itself in flowing curls and scarlet doublets, and went courting, and bragging, and bouncing—making a brave show.

But all those merry, foolish days of youth are gone, and we are very sober, very solemn—and very stupid some say—now. The world is a grave, middle-aged gentleman in this nineteenth century, and would be shocked to see itself with a bit of finery on. So it dresses in black coats and trousers, and black hats, and black boots, and, dear me, it is such a very respectable gentleman—to think it could ever have gone gadding about as a troubadour or a knight-errant, dressed in all those fancy colours! Ah, well! we are more sensible in this age.

Or, at least, we think ourselves so. It is a general theory now-a-days that sense and dulness go together.

Goodness is another quality that always goes with blackness. Very good people indeed, you will notice, dress altogether in black, even to gloves and neckties, and they will probably take to black shirts before long. Medium goods indulge in light trousers on weekdays, and some of them even go so far as to wear fancy waistcoats. On the other hand, people who care nothing for a future state go about in light suits; and there have been known wretches so abandoned as to wear a white hat. Such people, however, are never spoken of in genteel society, and perhaps I ought not to have referred to them here.

By the way, talking of light suits, have you ever noticed how people stare at you the first time you go out in a new light suit? They do not notice it so much afterwards. The population of London have got accustomed to it by the third time you wear it. I say "you," because I am not speaking from my own experience. I do not wear

such things at all myself. As I said, only sinful people do so.

I wish, though, it were not so, and that one could be good, and respectable, and sensible without making oneself a guy. I look in the glass sometimes at my two long, cylindrical bags (so picturesquely rugged about the knees), my stand-up collar, and billycock hat, and wonder what right I have to go about making God's world hideous. Then wild and wicked thoughts come into my heart. I don't want to be good and respectable. (I never can be sensible, I'm told; so that don't matter.) I want to put on lavender-coloured tights, with red velvet breeches and a green doublet slashed with yellow; to have a light blue silk cloak on my shoulder, and a black eagle's plume waving from my hat, and a big sword, and a falcon, and a lance, and a prancing horse, so that I might go about and gladden the eyes of the people. Why should we all try to look like ants crawling over a dust-heap? Why shouldn't we dress a little gaily? I am sure, if we did, we should be happier. True, it is a little thing, but we are a little race, and what is the use of our pretending otherwise, and spoiling fun. Let philosophers get themselves up like old crows, if they like. But let me be a butterfly.

Women, at all events, ought to dress prettily. It is their duty. They are the flowers of the earth, and were meant to show it up. We abuse them a good deal, we men; but, goodness knows, the old world would be dull enough without their pretty dresses and fair faces. How they brighten up every place they come into! What a sunny commotion they—relations, of course—make in our dingy bachelor chambers! and what a delightful litter their ribbons and laces, and gloves and hats, and parasols and kerchiefs make! It is as if a broken rainbow had been scattered about the room.

It is one of the chief charms of the summer, to my mind, the way our little maids come out in pretty colours. I like to see the pink and blue and white glancing between the trees, dotting the green fields, and flashing back the sunlight. You can see the bright colours such a long way off. There are four white dresses climbing a hill in front of my window now. I can see them distinctly, though it is three miles away. I thought, at first, they were milestones out for a lark. It's so nice to be able to see the darlings a long way off. Especially if they happen to be your wife and your mother-in-law.

Perhaps, though, it is unwise to suggest women's thinking more of dress. They do it too much already. Indeed, it seems the only subject they ever get thoroughly interested in, and they talk about it all day long. If you see two women together, you may bet your bottom dollar they are discussing their own or their friends' clothes. You notice a couple of child-like beings, conversing by a window, and you wonder what sweet, helpful words are falling from their sainted lips. So you move nearer, and then you hear one say:

"So I took in the waistband, and let out a seam, and it fits beautifully now."

"Well," says the other, "I shall wear my plum-coloured body to the Jones's, with a yellow plus-tron; and they've got some lovely gloves at Puttick's, only one and elevenpence."

I went for a drive through a part of Derbyshire

once, with a couple of ladies. It was a lovely bit of country, and they enjoyed themselves immensely. They talked dressmaking the whole time.

"Pretty view, that," I would say, waving my umbrella round. "Look at those blue, distant hills! That little white speck, nestling in the woods, is Chatsworth, and over there—"

"Yes, very pretty indeed," one would reply. "Well, why not get a yard of sarsenet?"

"What, and leave the skirt exactly as it is?"

"Certainly. What place d'ye call this?"

Then I would draw their attention to the fresh beauties that kept sweeping into view, and they would glance round, and say "charming," "sweetly pretty," and immediately go off into raptures over each other's pocket-handkerchiefs, and mourn with one another over the decadence of cambric frilling.

I believe if two women were cast together upon a desert island, they would spend each day arguing the respective merits of sea-shells and birds' eggs considered as trimmings, and would have a new fashion in fig leaves every month.

Very young men think a good deal about clothes, but they don't talk about them to each other. They would not find much encouragement. A fop is not a favourite with his own sex. Indeed, he gets a good deal more abuse from them than is necessary. His is a harmless failing, and it soon wears out. Besides, a man who has no foppery at twenty will be a slatternly, dirty-collar, unbrushed-coat man at forty. A little foppishness in a young man is good; it is human. I like to see a young cock ruffle his feathers, stretch his neck, and crow as if the whole world belonged to him. I don't like a modest, retiring man. Nobody does—not really, however much they may prize about modest worth, and other things they do not understand.

A meek deportment is a great mistake in this world. Uriah Heep's father was a very poor judge of human nature, or he would not have told his son, as he did, that people liked humbleness. There is nothing annoys them more, as a rule. Rows are half the fun of life, and you can't have rows with humble, meek-answered individuals. They turn away our wrath, and that is just what we do not want. We want to let it out. We have worked ourselves up into a state of exhilarating fury, and then, just as we are anticipating the enjoyment of a vigorous set-to, they spoil all our plans with their exasperating humility.

Xantippe's life must have been one long misery, tied to that calmly irritating man, Socrates. Fancy a married woman, doomed to live on from day to day without one single quarrel with her husband! A man ought to humour his wife in these things. Heaven knows their lives are dull enough, poor girls. They have none of the enjoyments we have. They go to no political meetings; they may not even belong to the local amateur parliament; they are excluded from smoking carriages on the Metropolitan railway, and they never see a comic paper—or if they do, they do not know it is comic: nobody tells them.

Surely, with existence such a dreary blank for them as this, we might provide a little row for their amusement now and then, even if we do not feel inclined for it ourselves. A really sensible man does so, and is loved accordingly, for it is little acts of kindness such as this that go straight to a woman's heart. It is such like proofs of loving self-sacrifice that make her tell her female

friends what a good husband he was—after he is dead.

Yes, poor Xantippe must have had a hard time of it. The bucket episode was particularly sad for her. Poor woman! she did think she would rouse him up a bit with that. She had taken the trouble to fill the bucket, perhaps been a long way to get specially dirty water. And she waited for him. And then to be met in such a way, after all! Most likely she sat down, and had a good cry afterwards. It must have seemed all so hopeless to the poor child; and, for all we know, she had no mother to whom she could go and abuse him.

What was it to her that her husband was a great philosopher? Great philosophy don't count in married life.

There was a very good little boy once who wanted to go to sea. And the captain asked him what he could do. He said he could do the multiplication table backwards, and paste seaweed in a book; that he knew how many times the word "begat" occurred in the Old Testament; and could recite "The Boy stood on the Burning Deck," and Wordsworth's "We are Seven."

"Werry good—werry good, indeed," said the man of the sea; "and ken yer kerry coals?"

It is just the same when you want to marry. Great ability is not required so much as little usefulness. Brains are at a discount in the married state. There is no demand for them, no appreciation even. Our wives sum us up according to a standard of their own, in which brilliancy of intellect obtains no marks. Your lady and mistress is not at all impressed by your cleverness and talent, my dear reader—not in the slightest. Give her a man who can do an errand neatly, without attempting to use his own judgment over it, or any absurd nonsense of that kind; and who can be trusted to hold a child the right way up, and not make himself objectionable whenever there is lukewarm mutton for dinner. That is the sort of a husband a sensible woman likes; not one of your scientific or literary nuisances, who go upsetting the whole house, and putting everybody out with their foolishness.

This is already a rather long paper, I fear; but before concluding I wish to say, in all seriousness, a few words about women's boots. The women of these islands all wear boots too big for them. They can never get a boot to fit. The bootmakers do not keep sizes small enough.

Over and over again have I known women sit down in the middle of a walk, and declare they could not go a step further, because their boots hurt them so; and it has always been the same complaint—too big!

It is time this state of things was altered. In the name of the husbands and fathers of England, I call upon the bootmakers to reform. Our wives, our daughters, and our mothers-in-law are not to be tortured and lamed with impunity. Let "narrow twos" be kept more in stock. That is the size I find most women take.

JEROME K. JEROME.

***** GAMEKEEPER GOSSIP.

WE found Donald making flies against the coming of the "gentry," a Duke and his friends. He prided himself on his workmanship, and let it be understood that very few keepers are "up" to the dainty art. Some of his finished

flies were gaudy specimens, largely composed of the plumage of foreign birds. He valued the raw material before him at ten pounds, and, to convince us, showed a small piece of a bird's breast preserved, which he said had cost fifty shillings. Flies could not be made without money, still they were much cheaper than those bought in a shop, and better. For his own part he would sooner fish with the sombre coloured ones that cost next to nothing. He had no faith in fine feathers; but it was more important to please the gentry than to please himself. When he went a fishing on his own account he rarely used any flies except those made from the feathers of local birds. The domestic cock, a wild drake, or a pheasant supplied quite as much brilliancy of plumage as fish cared about. Gay flies represented nothing known thereabout in nature, and a salmon, for instance, was not so brainless as some bipeds, that strutted about carrying a rod; but never much fish. The artificial should resemble the natural fly as nearly as possible.

Well, no, we are troubled very little with poachers in this part of the country. Boys may require a chase occasionally, but they don't do much mischief. The otter—confound him—is our greatest poacher, and the worst to get at. There is nothing more provoking than to find a number of fish half eaten, and no clue to the where-abouts of the depredator. When traced to a hole, generally in a rock, if you lack patience to wait until he appears, why a trap may do the business. We don't keep proper dogs for hunting him, and so when the ground is covered with snow, we keep a sharp outlook. The tracks guide us; snow is a grand tell-tale.

Foxes? Oh, yes. They are not hunted through as in other places; the country is too hilly and rough for that. The gentlemen in the neighbourhood would soon raise a pack of hounds if it was any good, but it isn't. We have to destroy them in any way we can. We shoot the old ones generally, and dig for the young. Every spring we make a raid on them, a disagreeable job it is, lying out night after night. Yes, "vulpicide" has a nasty sound, but how can we help it? They would destroy all the game unless we kept them down. When possible we take them alive; they sell very well: fifteen shillings or more. But the difficulty is to catch them living. Traps are almost useless for the old ones; they have too much sense to go near a trap, let it be covered ever so carefully; and should a young one happen to be taken in that way, the chances are that we have to kill it afterwards, for its legs are sure to be broken or much hurt.

That stuffed, ferocious-looking animal is a pole-cat. They are getting to be very rare. We have only got two within the last ten years, that one and another. It would be a bad prospect if they were common. The fox is destructive enough, but that used to be more so. Like all his tribe he was a bold, dangerous fellow. He would think nothing of flying at you and tearing your eyes out. I hate the brute—the only animal I do hate. The reason, perhaps, is that I got a terrible fright as a boy from one. It was in a trap, and when I approached, it broke the fastening with the spring it gave to get at me. I took to my heels, and, believe me, in a lonely place on a dark night I can hear that pole-cat and the trap rattling over the ground! To give the fox justice he never

shows such a savage nature; indeed, he is comparatively mild mannered. Poor chap, we are very hard on him, too, for scarcely a year goes by but we kill about twenty.

The hawk that you admire—my own stuffing—is a buzzard. It is a fine bird in appearance—a handsome bird. I like the hawks, yet unfortunately my occupation is to kill them. And I am the greatest foe to my favourite, the peregrine falcon. We get a good many hawks of all kinds during the course of the year. Spare their nests? Certainly not. It would make no difference whether they had eggs or young. When we meet with a nest we lie in wait for, and shoot the old birds, and then harry the nest—if it can be got at. But as most of the hawks build in high rucks, they sometimes defy us. I have known us watch where there was a nest day after day, and, after all, the brood was reared.

The pretty little white creature under the glass—a stoat—is closely related to the polecat—bad blood, very. By the colour of his fur you can see he was killed in winter. The stoat is brown in summer, and sometimes in winter as well, for he only changes after severe cold. Another name he goes by is “ermine weasel;” you know how he gets it? The skins of the wicked little wretches are in great demand to deck grave judges and fine ladies. Do you say that white is emblematical of blamelessness? Well, then, I may tell you black would become the stoat better, not only in winter, but all the year round. Blamelessness! Bless you, he is never out of mischief. He kills right before him. Poultry, pheasants, grouse, hares and rabbits are his victims in turn. He would have no chance with a rabbit or a hare in the open, you might imagine, for he is by no means swift; however, that is not the case. By some means he paralyzes them, and instead of running right away when they find themselves in danger, they hop about in a zigzag circular course, while he draws nearer and nearer, until at last the cries of the victim proclaim that the tragedy is nearly at an end. In a very short time he is up and off in search of something else to kill. When he once gets a grip you would be surprised how he holds on. He will suffer himself to be dragged far enough along the ground or carried high into the air. You see that grey crow along with the subject in the case. Well, having pounced on the crow, he was carried up into the air, but the crow got the worst of it, and they both fell; the crow dead, and the weasel seemingly nothing the worse before I put my foot on him. Bad brutes, weasels and all their kin, ferrets included. One of my ferrets got loose the other day and killed seven turkeys; think of that!

Of course, being always out, we are bound to see a number of animal battles. It's great fun to watch how keenly they fight. As long as everything is against everything else, I don't see how we can get along without war. A great change must take place before the lion lies down with the lamb, or the stoat sees the force of respecting the game laws. There will be no use for us keepers in those days, said Donald, twitching one of his eyes; but really I don't consider the present arrangement at all amiss. It's grand to see a good fight when both sides are pretty evenly matched. The best thing I ever beheld in that way, was an eagle and a stag.

The eagle swooped down on the stag, fastening its talons behind the head, and then flapped violently with its wings over the eyes of the attacked, so that it blinded the deer, which rushed wildly forward, without apparently seeing what lay before it. Talons and beak were not idle in the struggle, and the blood soon flowed profusely. The contest would probably have gone against the stag but for intervention. Donald had heard before then of eagles having attacked deer in a similar manner, driving them over a precipice or into a ditch, thus making them an easy prey.

That was the last eagle I saw, sir. They are becoming very rare. You may see a chance one now and again, but that's all. Magnificent birds, only they play the deuce with game.

Yes, that's a seal-skin coat. I get one or two seals every season. They are very troublesome to the salmon fishers. You know there are bag-nets all along the coast. The seals, with their strong claws, rip the nets open like winking, and eat the salmon, or allow them to escape. Then I am sent for to shoot them. But I don't get every one I kill, as some sink and are lost. The gun is no good for seals; you don't get near enough; it has to be a rifle.

On the whole I like a gamekeeper's life; yes, better than anything I know of.

JOHN SUTHERLAND.

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The following entries are extracted from the parish books of Ecclesfield, South Yorkshire:—

1619. Item. 7 metts [i.e. bushels] of		
lyme for poyniting some places		
in the church wall, and on the		
leades	ijs. iiijd.	
Item. For 11 gallands of strong		
liquor for the blending of the		
lyme	iijs. viijd.	

Two years later we find mention of “strong liquor” for pointing and ale for drinking:—

1621. For a secke of malt for point-		
ing steeple	vijjs.	
To Boy wyfe for Brewing itt		vjd.
For xvij gallons of strong		
Lycker	vijje. 4d.	
For sixe gallons of ale wch. we		
bestowled of the workmen		
whilst they was pointing		
steeple	ijs.	
For eggs for poyniting church		ijs.

Many of the old parish accounts contain items similar to the foregoing.

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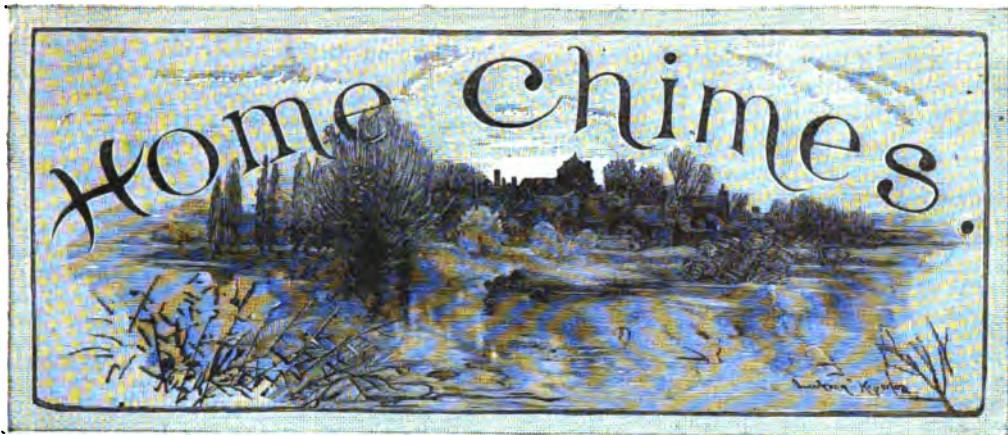
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VOL. III. No. 43.]

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THE
MYSTERY OF SIR OLIVER VALAYNES.
BY MRS. GREGG.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

ABOUT the year 1780 a certain Baronet, Sir Oliver Valaynes, brought home to his residence, Valaynes Park, his newly married bride.

A sufficiently ordinary occurrence in every-day life, but on this occasion the circumstances were peculiar. Sir Oliver was sixty, his bride being scarcely one-third of that age.

He was a Baronet of wealth and long descent; and she, the daughter of the Rev. Isaac Farley, Vicar of Tregon in Cornwall, a small parish of very moderate endowments; but she was a gently nurtured girl, and more educated than was common in England a hundred years ago; for her father, himself a graduate at Oxford, had carefully taught her and read with her, from childhood up.

It was with no trifling fear for her happiness that he gave her to Sir Oliver, not from any doubt as to his character or his affection for the young girl he had sought with the ardour of a far more youthful lover, but from the difference in age, and the equally great difference in the sphere of life that she had been used to, and that which he invited her to enter.

It was during Alicia Farley's first introduction to what to her was high life, that Sir Oliver Valaynes, a visitor at the Bishop's Palace, where she and her father had been invited for a day or two, was so struck by her rare beauty and gentle but refined demeanour that he, who for his twenty years of widowhood had never been known to address any lady otherwise than in terms of ceremonious politeness, singled out this young girl by his assiduous attention during the short time they

were together at the Bishop's, and shortly afterwards presented himself at the Vicarage of Tregon, requesting from the Vicar permission to pay his addresses to Miss Farley.

Sir Oliver had at this time a son thirty years of age, and a daughter of twenty-eight, consequently, in asking a girl of little more than nineteen to become his wife, he was asking her to become step-mother to people much older than herself, and to take the place at the head of his household and estate, which had for many years belonged to his daughter. But Sir Oliver was what is called "a very winning man," and he knew how to overpower the fears and doubts that arose in Miss Farley's mind as well as in that of her father, and though for a little time she could not make a decision, he yet, in the end persuaded her to do so in the manner he desired.

There was yet another cause for uneasiness in the mind of Miss Farley's father (her mother had been some years dead).

He was aware that between her and young George Rumford, whose father was the rector of an adjoining parish, a youthful attachment had subsisted. How far it had proceeded between them, whether it had any very real or deep hold on his daughter's heart, he did not know; it was all between themselves; young Rumford's position as a medical student, without any independent means or income, having probably hindered his ever speaking to her father on the subject.

He had barely completed his medical studies when he went out to Madeira, in charge of a young man, the son of a rich London merchant, whose life it was thought would be saved by a resort to this island, then coming into notice as a refuge from consumption.

But the young man died, and the young doctor remained abroad. His friends said he was still in Madeira, at any rate he did not return to England, and so far as Mr. Farley knew, there had not been any correspondence kept up between him and his daughter. Still, when he found she did not reject the idea of Sir Oliver Valayne's suit, he would

have been glad if young Rumford, who was a very fine-looking, agreeable young man, had never been permitted to ingratiate himself with her as he had done.

With regard to Sir Oliver, Mr. Farley left his daughter perfectly free, counselling her to consult her own heart and feelings, and be careful that she was in no way blinded by the rank and wealth of her elderly lover; and when she told him that she had made up her mind to accept him from feelings wholly apart from, and superior to, these considerations, he was almost satisfied with her decision.

Sir Oliver's son was at that time in Paris, and his daughter, Miss Valaynes, received her young step-mother with rare magnanimity and kindness that soon ripened into affection, and without jealousy, saw her take the head of that little "royalty of home," where she had herself for many years been paramount. In fact, these two women became like sisters, and in her father's gentle and lovely young wife his daughter seemed to find the filling up of this relationship, which she always regretted had been denied to her.

Valaynes Park was a grand old place. It had belonged to various branches of the same family from the time of the first Henry of English history, and the trees it contained were among the finest in England.

The situation of the mansion was delightful, standing on rising ground in the midst of a park so extensive, that many different roads led up through it. A natural lake lay in one part of it, from which a picturesque and winding river ran sparkling on, increasing the natural beauty of the scenery.

A herd of deer whose fathers had ranged its deep oak glades for centuries, and coverts profusely filled with game, were among the features of this far-reaching demesne.

The mansion was a most picturesque medley of many architectural styles, added to and altered as it had often been from the Early English of its foundation onward, and presenting a charming combination of gables, with deep arched doorways in them, mulioned bay-windows reaching out to the smooth mass of sward that, except on the wide sweep in front, lay close up to the house, and for centuries had lain unturned. A verandah at one side was closed in with flowering creepers; rose gardens were cut in the verdant lawn, the sides of the ancient moat were clothed with a rare collection of bright-berried shrubs; gardens and orchards reached away at one side of the house, at the other was a group of cedars, grown from rootlets that a crusading ancestor had with difficulty and rare perseverance brought home from Lebanon.

These trees were the object of Sir Oliver's peculiar love and veneration. Not at the time we speak of, but some years afterwards, during a great storm, one of them was blown down—a very king among trees—and, had there been any doubt as to its age, it was then set at rest, for when the mighty root that, in its uprising, had left a chasm like that of an earthquake—when it was taken off the ancient cedar told how long a time had passed away since it was brought from Palestine.

The house was built of massive stone, a peculiar creamy white stone, of which a quarry existed on the estate. Gleaming like marble when the

sun shone on it, the stately old pile, from its commanding position, was seen from the country round rising above the deep woods like a crown set on their leafy heads.

To this home Sir Oliver brought his young bride, and her gentle breeding soon accommodated itself to the surroundings of a great household.

The baronet's first wife, Lady Eleanor, was the daughter and co-heiress of a nobleman whose title in default of male heirs became extinct, and her large fortune, being chiefly settled on the issue of the marriage, had been enjoyed principally by her son and daughter from the time they respectively came of age, her son, Mr. Valaynes, also inheriting from his mother, a handsome house in London.

The gentry from many miles round hastened to pay their respects to the new Lady Valaynes; and no small curiosity was manifested about her.

Her grace and beauty could not be denied, but critics found fault with the want of dignity that they pronounced needful to her position, and which those who remembered Lady Eleanor, declared she had possessed in such perfection.

That this pretty little girl, as they called her, could be attached to her husband, considering how much he was her senior, they pronounced to be very unlikely; if not "indeed impossible, considering she had been engaged before," which conclusion they drew from a crooked and enlarged version of her "attachment to some young doctor," brought from Cornwall by some good-natured person and assiduously circulated.

'But though the eyes of all the neighbouring gossips were thus fixed on Lady Valaynes and her elderly bridegroom, no trace of dissension or disagreement could be found.

Even with her step-children, though so much older than herself, she appeared on the best of terms, especially with Miss Valaynes, who might well have felt aggrieved by the loss of the position she had so long held as mistress of her father's house.

To the disappointment, however, of the busy-bodies in the Midland shire where these things happened, domestic happiness and contentment without a cloud reigned at Valaynes Park, and when Sir Oliver's son—who did not always live there, as he liked London and was fond of moving about—when he came home on a long visit, this peace was in no way disturbed.

The only shadow of a cloud that could be discerned was the uncertain health of the new Lady Valaynes, who, having never been strong as a girl, became still more delicate after her marriage, about two years after which she became the mother of a son, like herself, frail and delicate. Still, he lived and thrived, though slowly; and she lived, and became more and more delicate, until her weakness resolved itself into a nervous complaint which prevented her ever leaving home, and as time went on she first became unable to leave the house except for a short drive, then could not go out at all, and finally was confined almost entirely to her own apartments, and was often for days together unable to leave her bed.

Thus matters stood when she had been married about twenty years or so—that is to say, in the year 1800 or thereabouts. Her son, by name Everard, had in the meantime grown up an exceedingly nice lad, too delicate-looking for a

man, and yet undeniably handsome, with strong domestic affections, and a very fair share of intellect. By his own desire he was at Cambridge, and was already marked among the students as a lad of promise.

The Baronet's eldest son, named for him Oliver, still led the same life, vibrating between London and the country, and, when it seemed safe to do so—for the times were evil in France—running over for a time to Paris. He was still unmarried, that is, so far as was known, for there were rumours to the contrary, and of a disparaging nature, the person named with him being of very inferior rank, and with antecedents that were not desirable.

Miss Valaynes had become a decided old maid, whilst to the invalid she had been a most devoted and affectionate nurse.

Sir Oliver, now nearly eighty years of age, was a hale and hearty "fine old English gentleman," able to ride to cover, and keeping up most of his early habits, among which was extreme punctuality, which he often carried to the verge of tiresomeness, as whatever he said he would do at a certain time, he always *did*, come what might, even though the circumstances that led him to make the arrangement had altogether changed.

He was a very good-looking man for his age, and had always been remarkable for his great and unusual height; and having in these latter years grown somewhat portly, his size appeared almost gigantic.

Lady Valaynes had been some years married, when information came of the death of Doctor Rumford; the person to whom she was supposed to have been attached, and that he had died in the East was said, so at length all speculation regarding him came to an end.

One day, it was in the month of June, Sir Oliver entered his wife's apartments, where she was lying on her couch with her step-daughter by her side, and announced his intention of riding over to Bohun House, a place about five miles distant from Valaynes Park, and which was the residence of his great friend Colonel Bohun, a gentleman with whom he was more intimate than he was with any other acquaintance, Sir Oliver being himself a particularly sociable and friendly person.

At the same time he told Lady Valaynes and his daughter not to expect him until the following day at two o'clock, as he had formed an engagement, as was often his habit, to dine and sleep at Colonel Bohun's. According to his custom when going away for a day, he kissed his wife and daughter, bidding them good-bye in the kindest manner, and as he stooped over his wife's couch he said to her that he was "taking some deeds over to Bohun to witness for him."

The Valaynes estate was in some respects peculiarly situated.

Sir Oliver himself was the last life in the entail, which had long existed, and which hitherto had been limited to the male line.

He had often talked of making new and somewhat different arrangements, and some time before this his lawyer had been with him submitting the deeds that he had desired to be prepared; but which deeds Sir Oliver had not at that time signed, as he said he intended to study them well first. These documents he was now

prepared to put his name to, and he said he would get his signature witnessed by Colonel Bohun and by Mrs. Bohun's brother, Archdeacon Wynter, who was staying with them. Altogether a very rational and natural proceeding, and his wife and daughter bade him farewell without any surprise or uneasiness, being used to his occasionally visiting Bohun House in this manner.

About a quarter of an hour afterwards they heard the sound of his horse's hoofs as he cantered down the drive, followed by a mounted groom bearing his small valise.

The following day, two o'clock having struck, and Sir Oliver not having come to her, Lady Valaynes at half-past two began to wonder at his non-appearance, and sent down to know whether he had returned.

The servant she sent returned, saying he had not arrived, but the groom who had accompanied him on the foregoing afternoon had come back soon after ten o'clock, and said Sir Oliver desired him to say he would return by two, as he mentioned the day before.

However, the hours wore on, and still he came not.

Lady and Miss Valaynes waited dinner until eight o'clock, but in vain, and until one in the morning they waited and listened, but no Sir Oliver appeared, and at last Lady Valaynes could bear the suspense no longer, and about 2 A.M. dispatched a man on horseback with a note to Colonel Bohun, begging to know what had detained Sir Oliver, and if he were ill, why no message to that effect had been sent to her?

It was lovely summer weather in the beginning of June, the time of the year when it might almost be said "there is no night" then, so nearly does the lingering twilight meet the coming dawn.

The rays of the rising sun glinting over the tops of the old cedar trees, almost startled Miss Valaynes, as she stood before the portico wrapped in a large shawl, straining her eyes along every avenue by which she might see approaching her father's well-known and almost unmistakable figure, mounted on the large horse he used to ride, coming at last from some unlooked-for engagement, that for, perhaps, the first time in his life had hindered his coming home when he said he would.

What such engagement could be she knew not, but it must have existed, and it was only her step-mother's nervous condition which prevented her from seeing this, and alarmed her so, she frightened other people as much as herself.

Thus Miss Valaynes did as we often do—reasoned herself into the conclusions she wished; and because she could not bear to do so, did not realize that they were baseless.

How often, since driven from her step-mother's room by her perpetual utterance of forebodings—Miss Valaynes, who refusing to admit such ideas, had stationed herself where the first bringer of good tidings must earliest be met—how often in the partial darkness she had thought the lightly swaying branches, stirred by "the breeze that rustles forth at break of day," were the moving forms, the sounds she waited for!

Several roads through the extensive park converged upon the mansion, but coming from the direction of Bohun House, the straight way was up the avenue in front.

Before the dawn gave light enough to distinguish objects, something surely moved under the great trees nearest to where the avenue led into the sweep in front of the main entrance, and her heart stood still, awaiting what might be her father, or some messenger with tidings. A form came near, paused, and went on. It was a deer seeking its comrades, a tame creature, probably that Sir Oliver used to pet and feed.

Just at sunrise, round an angle of the house, came Colonel Bohun, the first glimpse of the white horse he always rode dispelling any doubt as to the identity of the rider.

"What have you to tell me?" cried Miss Valaynes; "is my father ill?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied Colonel Bohun; "he left me in perfect health and spirits soon after twelve o'clock yesterday. I did my best to get him to stay an hour or two longer, but nothing would keep him; he said he had told Lady Valaynes that he would be home at two, and that she, knowing his habits of punctuality, and being herself so nervous and easily alarmed, she would certainly be uneasy if he did not appear at the time he had named."

And so, a few minutes after twelve o'clock, Sir Oliver had mounted his horse at the doors of Bohun House, and ridden away in the direction of his home.

He told the Colonel he had sent his groom home some hours before, at his own request, that he might deliver a message at the stables, which he said he had forgotten to do when Sir Oliver gave it to him before leaving home on the previous day. This message was regarding a favourite hunter that was under treatment for illness, and Sir Oliver wished the animal not to be let out into the paddock, but kept in the loose box he was in until he should himself see him on his return from Bohun House.

The groom said if he were allowed to go away shortly before nine o'clock he would still be in time to have the horse kept in, and consequently his master desired him to go.

Colonel Bohun also said that Sir Oliver told him he did not mean to go home all the way by the direct road. The day was hot; it was high noon, with a very strong sun. He would go by the dingle for shade, and ride home through the wood.

"And I should have been here sooner," said the Colonel, "but I came the same way, and though at first I could not see, I kept calling out, so that if he were lying anywhere hurt and not able to rise, he could hear and answer me, though how that would be I cannot think. That horse he was on is quiet, I know; besides, where is the horse? In a case like that he would be sure to go home. I was never so astonished in my life as when I got Lady Valayne's note; I thought your father of course was safe at home."

Colonel Bohun was then conducted upstairs to where Lady Valaynes, pale and trembling, sat, supported by pillows, on a couch in her private sitting-room. She had passed the night listening and watching, without ever lying down.

The affair was mysterious to the last degree.

Sir Oliver never went from home without telling those he left behind where he was going and why. He was not known to have any enemy, or even ill-wisher, and was a popular man in such public

business as he entered into, this being chiefly anything connected with local or county business, and in private he was social and charitable.

His long life had been spent almost wholly at his home, Valayne's Park.

During his first wife's time he had indeed several times pleased her by going for short visits to London; but, excepting this, his time, money and influence had all been spent in his own neighbourhood.

During the last few years in some ways he had certainly seemed a little eccentric; but this tendency was so entirely confined to personal matters, that it interfered with no one, and nothing could be more marked than the way he kept closely from his wife the least thing that might affect her nervous and over-sensitive temperament.

Thus he had carried out, unknown to her, a strange fancy that would certainly have had a very disturbing effect upon her had she been aware of it.

CHAPTER II.

DISAPPEARANCE.

It has been mentioned that one of the cedar trees for which Sir Oliver had so great a regard was blown down in a storm. This tree was sawn into planks under his own inspection. For three years these planks were placed in the most favourable position for their becoming perfectly dried and seasoned, and they were then, still under Sir Oliver's instructions and his almost daily inspection, fashioned into a coffin, designed for use when his earthly life should end; and of all that he had possessed, he would want only this and room to lay it in.

That Sir Oliver had taken this unusual proceeding was perfectly well known to very many people, and certainly to every one in the country immediately around, excepting to his wife.

His orders on this point were too strict to be evaded even by a talkative waiting-maid, and as Lady Valaynes had never been down stairs from the time this was done, there seemed little chance of her becoming acquainted with it. Probably, had anything so unlikely come to pass as that she were to regain health and the power of walking, now long denied to her, her husband would have made arrangements different to those by which he disposed *ad interim* of that which his beloved cedar tree had been turned into in the last stage of its existence.

Few men would have cared to contemplate the making of this mournful receptacle, and to do so seemed especially opposed to the nature of one so cheery as Sir Oliver, enjoying life apparently as if he were half a century younger, and knowing no trouble but that to which he had been so long accustomed—his wife's continued illness.

Yet he constantly visited the carpenter employed at the work, and inspected it closely as it proceeded. To this man he said one day, that at his age accommodation such as this must soon be required, that he especially wished to be enclosed in his own cedar tree, and that it would greatly spare the feelings of his wife and daughter that, if he should die while alone in the house with them, as from the frequent absence of his sons

seemed probable, they would be saved the distress that would be occasioned if they were required to direct such arrangements as he had taken wholly on himself. He would place, he said, inside this coffin, when completed, directions for his being laid in it; in whatever clothes he died in there was to be no change, and that he should be quietly lowered into the vault of his forefathers without any pomp or ceremony beyond the reading of the burial service.

The man listened and proceeded with his work, but he was not prepared for the baronet's stepping into it one day and lying down to test the fitness of its proportions, "for," he said, "I find I am still getting heavier, and it would be a bad job at last if, just when it was wanted, they found it would not do."

After inspecting and watching the work all through, Sir Oliver himself superintended its removal.

The Valaynes family, as has been mentioned, was of considerable antiquity.

On the confines of the park stood a small church built and endowed by a Sir Oliver Valaynes four centuries before this time, and, as was shown by an inscription on a brass plate let into the wall, as well as by deeds preserved in the diocesan registry, this church was a renewal of one still more ancient, founded by a yet more remote ancestor of the present family. The tomb of the crusading Humfrey Valaynes who brought home the cedar slips was originally placed in it, and it remained still, though not as it had been, in the body of the church, for in the re-building—renovation we should call it now—this part of the old church had been formed into a side chapel to the present structure and appropriated as the last resting place of the race to whose liberality the erection of the church was chiefly owing.

Their monuments were within it, their remains rested in the vault below, all but the Crusader, who was believed to lie inside his tomb cased in the same creamy white stone of which the mansion of the living Valaynes was built, but here smoothed and polished up like marble. His effigy was on it, all in chain armour, with helmet and visor, in one hand a crucifix; the other held a sword, and surely it had been a trusty sword, and of true and well forged steel, for its owner came safely back to plant his cedars, and lived to see that they took kindly to the English soil, and also to marry the lady who, with the faithfulness of those high-hearted times, had waited for him, and by whom he left three sons, Oliver and Everard and Humfrey.

Thither, to this little side chapel, sacred alike to the remembrance of the past, and to the hope of an enduring and brighter future, Sir Oliver had his cedar coffin brought, and laid it down beside the tomb of the Crusader, from whom, in an unbroken succession, he was descended. Nowhere could it have been more completely secure from the intrusive hand of curiosity, for the chapel was closed by massive iron gates always kept locked, save when thrown open to admit one of the Valaynes to the last home of their ancestors; but the keys of the chapel were kept by the head of the family, and being therefore in the possession of Sir Oliver, he could open the doors for the passage of what had probably never before been taken through them, an unoccupied coffin.

Secure and unmolested as it lay there, it was yet by no means in privacy, for the iron gates, though of massive structure, were of an open design, and it did not require that a person should be close to them to see what lay within. There was probably not one of the ordinary congregation, perhaps scarcely one of the parishioners, who had not, through the wide fret-work of these doors, looked in at the unusual spectacle.

The Crusader they were well used to, but this—

Various were the opinions about it; many the motives assigned, but in a general way the proceeding was condemned, and, having said that Sir Oliver had become rather eccentric, this relation will perhaps be taken in proof thereof.

To return to the search for the missing baronet.

Inquiries were immediately set on foot, and a search commenced in all directions. Colonel Bohun, at the request of Lady Valaynes, taking the direction and superintendence of it.

Sir Oliver was found to have passed through the small village close to Bohun House at about a quarter-past twelve o'clock, and was traced as far as a turnpike less than two miles from his own house. This turnpike was not far from a wood which formed the nearest point in that quarter of the Valayne's demesne, and through which persons coming from that side generally took their way to the mansion, the entrance gates being farther on.

The old woman who kept the 'pike said that Sir Oliver had ridden up the day before at about a quarter to one o'clock, or may be a few minutes later, she could not be quite exact, as she never thought the time would be wanted like this, and had not marked it more than common; but he stopped to ask her about her family, and then trotted away into the wood.

Beyond this all effort to discover any trace of Sir Oliver failed, as no one had seen him from the time he disappeared from the sight of the old turnpike keeper.

It having been suggested that he had been way-laid in the wood, it was determined that a careful examination of it should take place, and, to the amazement of every one, Lady Valaynes, who had not left her rooms for long, insisted on being well wrapped up and carried to an open carriage that she might herself superintend the search. The wood was examined almost inch by inch, but nowhere could any traces of a struggle having taken place be found, and on the ground, hard and dry under the summer sun, no hoof mark could be seen.

Meantime an express had been sent to London and Cambridge, summoning Sir Oliver's two sons, who arrived as soon as the journey from those places could be made with the facilities for travelling that then existed.

The eldest son immediately at Lady Valaynes' request, examined his father's papers, &c., and found everything correct and in good order, and a considerable sum of money in his cash-box.

Handbills were printed, and widely circulated, describing the baronet and his horse, which was also missing, and might well be recognized by its size, being a very large, powerful animal, marked in a peculiar manner. Messengers were dispatched to all the fairs not only in the county where these things happened, but also in those adjoining, in

the hope that at some of them the horse might be offered for sale, and large rewards were advertised for any clue to the whereabouts of Sir Oliver Valaynes, but all in vain.

Lady Valaynes seemed to suffer very much after the unusual exertion of going to the wood. She became weaker than before, and her very evident grief, aggravated by the uncertainty that attended the cause of it, told greatly on her already debilitated frame, and brought on a return of the nervous affection she had before suffered from, and which of late years had been partially subdued.

As may be imagined, this disappearance of one of its best-known and principal inhabitants set the country in commotion. Wonder and excitement prevailed, and all sorts of rumours flew about, one being that Lady Valaynes was privy to the cause of her husband's extraordinary absence and had a hand in bringing it about.

This malignant idea was connected with her early attachment to young George Rumford. There was no reason why anyone should have a dislike to Lady Valaynes.

To strangers, and the public at large in her husband's neighbourhood, she was but little known, as her health was, almost from the commencement of her married life, too delicate for receiving or entering into company. This ill-health was now ascribed to fretting at having sacrificed her youthful lover to the rank and wealth of a man who was more than old enough to be her grandfather. Doctor Rumford's death was denied, and it was asserted that he had lately been in communication with Lady Valaynes.

But these were not the only rumours abroad—the air seemed full of them. The envy that can distort that which is probable and natural, gloats upon a strange and unnatural mystery.

It was known there was something peculiar in the way the Valaynes property was held, and this very partial knowledge was applied to the disappearance of its owner, as in some way accounting for it, by making it someone's interest that he should die before a certain date.

The real fact was that the ancient title-deeds, which established an entail limited to heirs male, left this entail on the lands for five hundred years from the date of its establishment. The wording ran, translated into modern phraseology: "And if this world, which for its wickedness will yet be destroyed, shall last beyond that time, he who is then possessor of De Valeynes lands (the name was formerly written thus) shall mete them out and dispose of them as he shall think fit, having regard to the glory of God by still maintaining the chapelry, and the good of man by causing a right and just holding of the lands of De Valeynes to be then newly made, always minding that these lands are held from the crown of this realm of England for the payment at every Yuletide of one penny of lawful coin."

The five hundred years mentioned in this deed expired after Sir Oliver had been for some years married to his first wife, and it was probably because the succession to the Valaynes property was thus not secured to the eldest son, that the chief part of his mother's large property devolved upon him.

Sir Oliver Valaynes, punctual as he was to any appointment he had made, was yet most

dilatory in matters of business, and the extreme difficulty there was in getting him to make up his mind when there were several courses open to him was strikingly shown by the fact that until what now appeared to be the end of his life he had not made any legal arrangement regarding his estate, if after his death confusion, and perhaps disputes were to be avoided.

A few years before, he seemed to be on the point of doing so. Deeds had been prepared for this purpose by Mr. Layton, an elderly solicitor who had long done Sir Oliver's business, his father before him having also long been law agent to the Valaynes property, but these deeds had not been signed when Mr. Layton suddenly died, and leaving only a family of daughters, his business passed into other hands, being purchased by a solicitor living also in the county town.

Sir Oliver left his business with this gentleman, Mr. Chester, but he never was on the same terms of kindly familiarity with him as had characterized his intercourse with his friend and adviser Mr. Layton.

Excepting Colonel Bohun, Mr. Layton was the only person who could have done what both of them did more than once—remonstrated with Sir Oliver about the unsettled state of his affairs.

"My dear Sir Oliver," Mr. Layton would say, "depend upon it, if things remain this way, the end of it will be, the estate will have to be settled in Chancery—a most costly and tedious proceeding, and very likely to leave things far enough from what you would wish. No man dies an hour the sooner for making his will."

Sir Oliver was very sure of this, but in his case he said there was so much to consider, and more than once he ended by saying, in a tone of satisfaction—"Lady Valaynes is all right, will or no will;" and this was true, for at the time of her marriage he had settled on her a very handsome jointure, and also for a residence Valaynes Park, adding, however, that the mansion being so commodious it was his wish that any of his children who might wish to live in it should do so, there being ample room for more than one establishment, and he also directed a certain sum to be paid to Lady Valaynes yearly for the maintenance and repair of the house, which, from the great age of some parts of it, frequently required outlay.

This marriage settlement, more liberal than that made on his first wealthy bride, was actually the only legal document that would be in force at his death, unless he took steps to the contrary, and it was after Mr. Layton had put this plainly before him that Sir Oliver gave directions for the preparing of the deeds that still lay unsigned in his desk when Mr. Layton died.

Lady Valaynes knew scarcely anything of business. Probably she did not know or understand the position of her husband's estate, but she had unbounded confidence in his wisdom and justice; and as he had told her that her son Everard should be well provided for, she had no solicitude on the subject, though she knew that, as a matter of course, his eldest brother, or rather step-brother, would occupy a superior position.

When Sir Oliver told her, as he bade her good-by the day he went over to Colonel Bohun's, that he was taking some documents to be signed, she remembered his telling her before Mr. Layton's death that he was preparing deeds for him, and

she wondered if they had lain so long unsigned, and, not liking to detain him then, thought she would ask him about it on his return.

Sir Oliver said "deeds;" he did not use the word "will;" for in her low, nervous state his wife could not bear the least allusion that reminded her that from the disparity in age between her and her husband, there was a likelihood that in the course of nature she would be left without him.

That evening at Bohun House the Colonel and his brother-in-law, Archdeacon Wynter, had witnessed Sir Oliver's signature to two bulky parchments, they also signing the same afterwards as witnesses; but of the purport of these documents they knew nothing. As he returned them to the capacious pocket of which the broad tails then attached to gentlemen's coats were so capable, he said to Colonel Bohun—

"There! that's done at last; things will be all right after this."

Lost, with their lost owner!

When at length several months had passed, and no trace whatever of him they searched for had been obtained, Mr. Valaynes and his sister represented to their step-mother the utter hopelessness of continuing a search, that if any clue were to be had, they would long since have discovered it, and she was obliged to see the force of their reasoning, and to consent to trust to time as the only possible exponent of the mystery; but from that hour her health declined more and more, until six months after the disappearance of her husband she died.

Before her death she expressed a wish that her remains should be placed in the family vault, between Sir Oliver's father and mother, as she could not have her last resting-place beside him.

In order to show their affection and esteem for their step-mother, and also their entire and utter contempt for and disbelief in the malignant rumour regarding her, which she had never known, but which had so annoyed them, Mr. Valaynes and his sister determined to give her the most magnificent funeral possible, and accordingly invited all the gentry of the county, and even some from the neighbouring counties to attend, whilst they also wrote to every friend of their father's whom they could think of, and requested all the tenants on the extensive estates to be present at the obsequies of Lady Valaynes. Her own son Everard had been summoned from Cambridge, when her increased illness became apparent, and was with her for more than a week before she at last rather suddenly sank and died.

(To be concluded in our next number.)



THE LAST LEVÉE.

CLAD in all his richest emblems, who is't lies so calm asleep?
Note the helmet on his pillow where he rests in slumber deep;
See the sword, all bent and twisted in some olden, long-won fray.
Scent the lilies love has gathered for his last, best bed to-day.

He the warrior, he the hero, lies there, conquered pale and still;
He may never break the silence that has stayed his iron will.
See! upon his lips a Presence lays a calm and wondrous hand;
See! surprise upon the eyelids death has clasped in ice-like band.

Slowly, slowly, ever slowly, past the flower-encumbered bier,
Those he loved and those he hated pass beside him lying here;
Pass the women-folk who worshipped; pass the men by glory crazed;
Pass the lips that whispered scandal; pass the lips that ever praised.

What is this? Low wails, and weary, fall upon the listening ear:
Sobs of widows, plaints of orphans; clash of sword and sweep of spear—
Wave, oh flags! sound out, oh trumpets! Take no heed of child or wife;
This is glory, oh ye people! this the noble end of strife!

On they come—a shadowy phalanx: does he hear them as he lies;
Does the echo of his glory drown in death sad widow's cries?
See the stars upon the bosom of the new-enfranchised dead!
See he clasps a marshal's baton: 'twas for these his soldiers bled!

Tramping, tramping, ghostly armies glide along; where watch their time
Phantom sentries. Mail-clad warriors, pass by, murdered in their prime.
Do the lilies fade a little, do the trappings just wax dim,
As the souls of those he slaughtered wander past, and glance at him?

Glory, glory—mail-clad glory! stand beside, protect your son!
In your name he led his soldiers, 'twas for you these deeds were done:
You must stand and watch the levée he is holding—'tis his last—
Tis your hand must guard his body till this fearful crowd has passed!

Glory, glory! What is glory? Answer, oh thou mighty dead!
Ribbons, honours, stars and crosses; broken hearts, wounds running red?
Better far the poor and wretched wept their benefactor there;
Better than applause of millions is a gently whispered prayer!

Let him rest where low he lieth, worn and shattered in the fray;
Fold the flag across the coffin, for the evening groweth grey.
He must meet his soldiers boldly 'mid the shadows round his bed;
And let justice cope with glory for the honours of the dead!

J. E. PANTON.

"FAINT HEART FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELPTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK DEVENSEY IN TROUBLE.

AYLMER walked home thoughtfully. The Desforges were his best friends; indeed, he looked up to Mrs. Desforges. On many occasions he had been grateful for her sympathy and friendship. The Desforges were a childless couple, well on in middle life, and they always evinced a great interest in young people. The doctor considered himself bound in friendly regard to Aylmer—that Aylmer had an especial claim upon them—for he had promised the young man's father to look after him. The Devenseys had always been sore because of the Desforges partizanship for Aylmer. Devensey once so far forgot himself as to remonstrate with his partner for his partialities, but Desforges replied with so much spirit that Devensey felt himself humiliated, taking good care never to venture on the topic again. Aylmer would never have known of this but for Mrs. Desforges, and she let it slip in an unguarded moment.

Aylmer's mind dwelt on what had passed this afternoon. Mrs. Desforges spoke strongly when she was deeply moved—never unless. If she had her fads, she was never an impulsive woman—soon hot, soon cold. After what she had said, Aylmer's hopeless feeling was intensified. Edith Heron would succumb. He had been most guarded, he thought; it was impossible the Desforges could think that he had been deeply stirred. If he could but see more of her! He was pretty well informed by Dick Devensey of the mauner in which Edith Heron passed her day. She seldom missed the cathedral service. The dean's children would accompany her, no doubt. It was seldom that he attended service on a week-day. Many people went in the summer half an hour before service because the nave was cool, sauntering noiselessly up and down, threading the slender shafts, their eyes lifted up to the beautiful stained glass. He was near the minster; he looked at his watch; it was the hour when prayers commenced. He hurried along, and gained a small door, at which stood a verger. It was a sudden impulse, and he was in time; another verger was about closing the side door of the chapel. Had he gone round to the western door, which was more generally used, he would have been late. He entered by the Galilee porch; the door was standing a little open or he might have passed on, and the impulse died away. Though not generally known, the door in the Galilee was never fastened until late, so that any one from the dean's or the precentor's might pass through the minster instead of going round. Aylmer had often noticed the door ajar, but he had thought it was for the convenience of the vergers who lived in cottages adjacent. As he passed through, his mind oddly enough forgot the impulse that had caused him to enter. He passed

into the chapel mechanically, then as suddenly recollected himself, and his eyes glanced across to where the Dean's family was accustomed to sit. He noticed the Dean's wife, the children, and also Edith Heron. A verger recognizing him, led him up to a prebend's stall directly opposite. Aylmer, thus enthroned, had a fair view of the people on the other side.

Edith Heron rose to her feet, her eyes fixed upon her prayer-book, the two children with her as devout. The organ rippled and floated and burst into broad and deep harmony, and Aylmer almost felt himself in another world with the glorious tones swelling about, rising up among the arches, dying softly away in the radiating roof.

The choristers had come in and taken their places, and after them the deacons and canons. They sat and rose again. He forgot himself; he became conscious that his eyes were resting upon Edith Heron, that she had become conscious of his gaze. Had he given offence? Her eyes seemed to meet his a little defiantly. He felt sorry; then fancied that hers fell. Had she observed that he was contrite and wishful to remove an ill impression?

Aylmer always sang at prayers; he knew that his voice was not remarkable, but he was not ashamed of it. He knew that he had not a clear tone, that he had not much compass, but he always flattered himself that he had ear sufficient to prevent him from making discord. This afternoon he sang fervidly. He felt himself as familiar as the choristers with the chants, and he was very mindful not to clash with the boys when he came to the soprano, or with the altos. When the reader stood at the eagle he reasoned with himself that with tact he could look about him without apparently scanning any one, and have people believe that he was attentive. Few were the worshippers he noted. Saving the precinct people, few the townsfolk. A sprinkling of strangers were noticeable, their eyes wandering, their attitudes serious and alert. The beautiful service was not appreciated so much in the town as it should have been. Tom felt that he ought never to miss it. Many an afternoon he might come. Then he began to frame excuses for his past non-attendance. There was his fear of being out of the way should a patient call, or a message come for him to go out of town; a professional man has to hold himself in readiness. Now and again his eyes went across to the Dean's pew, and he would be a little taken aback, for each time the lady seemed to become aware that he was transgressing again. She seemed fearful herself of being detected detecting him, and she would look another way or lower her eyes.

At last she met his look quietly, and he felt that he could not continue staring at her. Then came the anthem. Tom was a long time before he forgot Crouch in G. A shade of annoyance marred this solaceful hour. At its close Tom observed the organist come forward and scan the congregation from his coign of vantage, then retire as if satisfied. Evidently, Tom thought, he wished to see if Edith Heron had attended the service that afternoon.

Aylmer went out at the close of the service, feeling a little ruffled. But what occasion was there for grinding of teeth, if the man did chose

to emerge from a small doorway to intercept Miss Heron, to hold her in conversation for a few moments. There was no edict against such a proceeding Aylmer well knew, but he could not help turning his head. The fellow's face was wreathed with smiles; how conceited and self-satisfied the fellow evidently was! He was certainly a sycophant. Aylmer felt that had the presumptuous being more size about him he would be a proper subject to kick. But no heightened colour suffused her face, no smile lit up her countenance. She did not exhibit much interest; she only responded with a grave and slight inclination, which afforded Aylmer much satisfaction.

"She is not desperately taken with him," soliloquised Tom, hopefully. But he could not stay and spy upon them, and watch how they comported themselves. Concentrating his curiosity in his ears, he was made sufficiently aware of the fact that the organist had returned to the cathedral and that the lady was close behind him.

"I should like to keep a woman's life bright," he murmured to himself, with a distinctive wish, "her life bright. Will her life be brighter than it has been? Not with him. She will be a slave to him! But what could I offer her? I've seen them"—he muttered, compassionately (of course he was thinking of married women anxious with their responsibilities, their narrow incomes)—"harassed with their petty cares, and I have pitied them from the bottom of my heart. I wonder how she is fixed for books! I should think that cad thinks she can exist on his music. I should like to jerk him over one of his own bars."

Aylmer had reached his room thus musing, and encasing himself in his easy-chair he ran his eye over his bookshelves. "I wonder where her taste lies!"

Then he threw himself back disconsolately. "This will never do," he muttered. "I shall soon be good for nothing. Heigho! I wonder what has become of Dick; it seems an age since last I saw him. Now one comes to think of it, such fellows are useful; they do enliven dull folk. This room has another aspect to me when he is in it. I almost wish I had cultivated people a little more. Perhaps it is a mistake living so much to one's self. I wonder if the fellow will drop in tonight. I have half a mind to send him a note."

Aylmer felt himself eager for Dick's company. It was an easy matter to turn Dick's loquacity into a channel which must lead the ingenuous fellow into a description of the habits and tastes of the people in the quaint corner house. Tom fell to staring out of window; the view was limited, but not unlovely. He had a pleasant grass plot; in the centre a gigantic pear tree flourished, and round the stem he had constructed with his own hands a shady seatage. There were flowers and shrubs, too, and a battlemented summer-house which he utilized as his surgery. It was a curious house; the part Aylmer occupied was what is termed a "jump" on a still older building—it was loftier, and had a portico with pillars. The old part of the house was picturesque with ivy, and the newer part was festooned with wisteria. Everyone called the place "Bachelor's Hall," and the name suited it; it was scarcely large enough for a married couple.

Aylmer had hitherto prided himself on his hermitage, on his monkish way of life. He had

been content with certain honours gained coming after close application, they seemed to make up for a solitary companionless life, they were proofs of industry and intelligence. Puffed up with this false pride, he had been wont to look back upon his life with satisfaction, declaring to himself that if he had to live it over again, he would follow the same course. He had doubted whether he should be happier with a change of condition. But now he began to feel his pride and his theories shallow, all his struggling and endurance a waste. Does not the man fettering his soul, seeking after fancied distinction or treasure, wake up some day and wish that he could shake off the crust of his old philosophies? He awakes to the grim realization of a possible future, he begins to dread the certainty of a lonely old age. He bewails the absence of the beautiful in his life. The real treasure and honour he has failed to reach or suffered it to escape him.

Aylmer took up the *Lancet*. He heard his housekeeper at the door. He almost wished for smoking time. He almost felt sure Dick would come in, he endeavoured to make himself cheerful with the possibility. He would sound the volatile fellow and get all out of him concerning the Dean and the Dean's wife, this Pulsford, and how the tide was running. There had been a friendship between Edward Pomfret the Dean's son and Dick. Ted Pomfret was a year or two older than Dick, but Dick had always sought his friends among his seniors. Young Pomfret was now at Oxford, but the friendship was still fast and firm, on the strength of it Dick had the *entrée* at the Deanery, Dr. Devensey winking at Dick's idleness when young Pomfret was at home. It was whispered a rich living in the gift of his uncle Lord Worksop was reserved for Pomfret, and the living was close to Tremenster. Edward Pomfret's mother had been first wife to the Dean.

"I shouldn't care to go there," soliloquized Aylmer, "I shouldn't care for the Dean's over-dressed wife. How that quiet old man endures her gaudy hues I cannot conceive. As I'm alive that is Dick's foot on the gravel. What is in the wind now? He has a more serious look on his face than I ever remember to have seen there before."

"I'm off!" exclaimed Dick, almost breathless, "there's been fireworks at our place. All through that hanged fellow who goes sneaking to Lady Mary's. He has got it into his miserable head that I am his rival, that I have a mean desire to supplant him. It appears he has been making our Cicely his confidante. He thinks Edith has been cool with him the last day or two. I walked to the Deanery with her this afternoon, that is my offence."

"I never saw you there?"

"No, I don't go inside often, sometimes I hang round when people are leaving. I saw you bustling into the Bail. I know you by your back and the colour of your hair."

"Why where were you?" asked Aylmer quickly.

"Oh—under the Exchequer Arch, young Poleshurst had come out of that fusty Doctor's commons of theirs for a breath of fresh air. The place smells of signed, sealed and delivered."

"I hadn't the slightest intention of annoying the humbug," continued Dick, "but he has his eye upon me it seems. Happening to meet Cicely,

I don't know what he said and she said; but there he opened out his budget, pouting and whining because of his mistress's coolness, doubting whether I was the honourable fellow he had always supposed me to be. Why isn't there a fair field for all comers—if I did march off with his fiancée—"

"Fiancée," stammered Aylmer, "has it got so far as that?"

"Perhaps that is premature," admitted Dick, "but if I had been her lover, and felt myself under a cloud I would have had it out with her."

"You have determined to be off, as you elegantly put it, because of so foolish a business, so trivial an affair. Sit down and have a cup of tea—I thought better of you, Dick; I thought you had more common sense."

"Trivial! But you haven't heard all. The governor takes it seriously, he thought I had no business to flirt or endeavour to flirt with young ladies. They should feel themselves bound by their engagements—and I, well I am a bad lot, it was gross and ungentlemanly of me. I had to listen to an account of my nefarious transactions from my youth up, the whole of the debtor side. I know there is not anything on the other. Furthermore that it was high time I began to think seriously of earning my own living."

"That is quite correct," said Aylmer, composedly.

"Yes," agreed Dick, shamefacedly, "I must own that was reasonable enough."

"Naturally your father would not wish you to make trouble," went on the peacemaker.

"Oh," said Dick, generously, "I blame the miserable swain for it all. Of course it was all true—my past worthlessness—but I didn't like to be told I was foolishly entangling a young lady, perhaps causing her future trouble, and that it was ridiculous for me to think of marriage. What cut me more was the governor inferring that Edith ought to know better. Why Tom, it is such foolishness to judge her—however, he wound up by telling me to marry, I should then be obliged to do something, only I was to locate myself in some other town and give him a chance of still holding up his head."

Aylmer saw it all. The Devenseys were afraid lest Dick should rival Mr. Pulsford. They did not like the idea of Dick marrying prematurely, a girl his senior—and without money or influence. Dick would be throwing his chances away. His intimacy at the Deanery would go for nothing. Something might occur there when Edward Pomfret was at home that might throw a well dowered girl in the lad's way, for Dick was a dark, handsome fellow, and the fair sex prefer the brigand style of men.

"So I am determined to be off," resumed Dick, for Aylmer had not answered him.

"By the next train?" assumed Aylmer with mock approval.

"I don't know," stammered Dick, "that's awful sudden. But hang me, I think I will. Let me see, it goes through at nine."

"Too late a train, Dick, if you mean town. Although an express, you would arrive at King's Cross after midnight, you don't pretend to know London."

"Well, it isn't as if I never had been there."

"I think you had better sleep on it, Dick. It is surprising how one's mind alters after a night's rest. One is scarcely the same being, one's impressions change so astonishingly. Your people are not aware of this sudden determination."

"I told them—I gave them to understand they would be relieved of my unwelcome visage."

"Forgot yourself!" suggested Tom, regret in his voice.

"No," stammered Dick, "I scarcely know what I did say I was so indignant, I felt it was all so foolish and unjust."

"Just so, wait till morning, go back home tonight. Unless you forgot yourself more than I can believe it of you, you can do that. You could have a shakedown here were it shelter you wanted, and we could then talk it over in the morning. Have some settled plan, my dear fellow, before you rush up to that throbbing life. I do not suppose you had thought of anything. Whatever you do don't leave your home in a bitter spirit, leaving a bitterness behind you. That alone would cripple me. As for that miserable cur, cut him, treat him with the contempt he deserves. I don't know that ever I took much notice of him until this afternoon, I did scan his face well, you were always talking of him," said Aylmer lamely.

"Well, and what is your opinion of him?" asked Dick, with cheerful expectation.

"Not amended with the version of your troubles, Dick."

"Why don't you creep up to Edith Heron, Aylmer? She would make a capital wife—what is money?" Dick spoke most insinuatingly, yet boldly.

"Creep—no, I must go boldly or not at all. You wretch, you wish me to avenge you, do you?"

"I don't want her to be thrown away," declared Dick firmly, "it amounts to that. They are not flush at Lady Mary's, Edith feels herself on Tom Tiddler's ground. Both the women are down and they are prepared to believe themselves forsaken. I thought this afternoon she looked sad—Edith I mean."

"Now sit down here and take one of those cigars," said Aylmer, moving with his foot the ottoman, "and don't try to make me as miserable as yourself. Let us talk about yourself to-night instead of in the morning."

Aylmer felt this was exactly the line he had chalked out when wishing for Dick's company; but then he had not bargained for deep shadows, he wished for rose colour.

"I've told you plenty about myself," answered Dick sourly.

"Ah, but what you intended doing—I mean. Some ideas you must have had."

"I scarcely know what I meant doing," said Dick gloomily.

"And had nothing suggested itself to you?" inquired Aylmer.

"Well, Aylmer, I may as well make a clean breast of it all. You know here I have been a star in amateur theatricals. I can sing a decent song, thump a tune out of a piano; perhaps I might get on as a super in some London theatre and wait my opportunity. I expect at home they would consider it a deep disgrace, if I went on the boards to earn my living. That is just what the

pater says of anything that is not particularly creditable, at which I am *au fait*. I have amused the people here as a Christy Minstrel, you know a town man said I was the only actor in 'Pickwick,' and what did you say yourself about 'Jeremy Diddler?' you said too I made a capital policeman in the 'Area Belle.' You can't unsay what you said, that our piece went better than it did given by professionals in Merport."

"I have no intention of eating my words my dear fellow," answered Tom, "you did well all of you, but remember what awful messes you had that no one suspected. It is different when you come to adopt the thing as a livelihood. I can't say I am in a position to give you the shady side of the profession, but I have an idea there is some hard buffeting."

Aylmer remembered to have had a decided opinion of Dick's talent, but he knew Dick too well, he did not wish to encourage him to embark in such a venturesome course. It was too perilous. The probability of failure was something serious to contemplate.

"So long as I got sufficient to keep body and soul together," said Dick modestly, "I would begin at the foot of the ladder."

"You would have to do that," said Aylmer, "but then think of your friends."

Aylmer himself had not the stupid idea that a person bred well was degrading himself choosing the profession of an actor, still he could not help having some pity for Dick. Dick would have to submit himself considerably to petty persecutions and tyranny at the outset, and Dick was a high spirited fellow.

"I am afraid your friends would not like it," said Aylmer.

"I am told," said Dick, "that the Dean had a brother who went on the stage, under an assumed name. I could do the same. I remember seeing him here. He was a perfect gentleman, none of us then suspected that he was an actor."

"I don't know how to advise you," confessed Aylmer honestly; "I do not like to discourage you, nor do I like to counsel you to make the plunge, considering the difficulties you must encounter and surmount. Try to get through, you should pass, try the hospitals again and work hard, you will pass I feel confident, then settle down comfortably to your life. I used to take notes of everything I saw done. If I can help you in any way I will."

"You are a good fellow Aylmer, you ought to be appreciated more. But you see my heart is not in it, and it is a hard thing to me. I will go now for Cicely, she is with Edith Heron. I did not intend going there, but it will be one way of creeping into the house again. She is scarcely worth dancing attendance upon, it was she who made everything so deucedly unpleasant for me. It wasn't sisterly—it is a queer thing to say, but I do believe our Cicely is a little envious of Edith Heron. I believe she wishes Edith to marry this unimportant fellow, afraid of Edith getting someone superior to what she herself may expect. Cicely neither shines nor looks anything where Edith comes. If you saw Cicely's millinery bills you would thank goodness you were not her better half. It is a good thing she has money of her own to pay them. I believe Edith Heron is independent or nearly so of milliners."

"You are a queer fellow," said Aylmer, with a grimace; "a *mauvais sujet*, a terrible brother. But I think all brothers are alike; they depreciate their sisters fearfully. How often I have wished that I had a sister. Why, now, Dick, you owe much to your sister. I always notice a sister brings a brother out. A fellow is never so much at ease among women as a fellow who has sisters. Dick, you would never go where you do but for Cicely."

"Oh, I do not know," said Dick carelessly. "We have both been in and out at Lady Mary's since we were children."

"I do not speak of Lady Mary in particular," said Aylmer, reddening. "You go to other houses where Cicely is intimate. But even there, if Cicely and Miss Heron had not continued friends, you would not go at all."

"I can't talk to a fellow who talks like a book," said Dick.

"Do you think, then, you will be advised by me?"

"I think so. You know best, Aylmer."

Dick departed, leaving Aylmer again pondering.

Dick seemed a strange, unmanageable fellow, a dreadful fellow, holding up his sister in so unamiable a light. But then, in Tom Aylmer's opinion, Cicely was not an amiable girl. One goes by first impressions, and first impressions are not to be scoffed at or disregarded.

He saw Cicely Devensey one of those chattering girls who will know every one and their business, sowing seeds of discord out of sheer garrulosity. She would be heard wheresoever she went; forward with men, and still an abominable prude, holding up her hands if any one went half as far in remarks as she was wont to go. In Aylmer's opinion, Cicely was as widely separate from Dick as pole from pole, though Dick was a most loquacious being. Why did Cicely so persistently thrust herself in at Lady Mary's, in season and out of season? If Edith Heron was really engaged, and the attachment reciprocal, Cicely's presence could not always be agreeable. Aylmer thought if he were in the lover's place he should hope to find Edith without her friend sometimes. He should remonstrate at so much of Cicely Devensey. It seemed to him that whenever the organist was at Lady Mary's Cicely contrived to be there too.

Aylmer thought a moment. Did Edith simply use Cicely as a foil, encourage Cicely's visits? Possibly Cicely's presence relieved Edith from attentions harassing, unwelcome, and inopportune. This lover, perhaps, was virtually accepted on compulsion. In the space of a few moments Aylmer contrived to ground himself in such an opinion. Afterwards a more striking idea operated on his mind. Had Cicely designs on Edith's lover, thrusting herself in the way? It was an uncharitable speculation, but Aylmer only hoped that it was so, and that the Machiavellian Cicely would be successful in her project. He wished that heartily.

(To be continued.)

CURIOSITIES OF SLAVERY IN
ENGLAND.

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.H.S.,
Author of "Historic Romance," &c.

DURING the whole of the Anglo-Saxon period slaves were sold like cattle in the open market. The slaves consisted of people, by right of conquest, others sold into slavery by their parents or by their own free will; thieves found guilty of stealing, as a punishment for their crimes, were often sold as slaves; not a few were doomed to slavery through not being able to pay penalties imposed for breaking the laws of the land; and lastly, we find traces of men voluntarily surrendering their liberty for food. Famines at this time occurred very often, and men were glad to be slaves for their daily bread. A parent might sell his child if it had reached the age of sever years, and at thirteen he might sell himself into slavery. A slave was generally estimated at four times the value of an ox. In the reign of King Athelstan the punishment for theft was most severe, and on the authority of Lingard we state that "a law was made respecting the offences committed by slaves against others than their masters. A man thief was ordered to be stoned to death by twenty of his fellows, each of whom was punished with three whippings, if he failed thrice to hit the culprit. A woman thief was burnt by eighty women slaves, each of whom brought three billets of wood to the execution. If she failed, she was likewise subjected to the punishment of three whippings. After the death of the offender, each slave paid three pennies as a fine to the proprietor."

As Christianity spread, the condition of the slave was happier than before its truths were known. The slave might be sold at the pleasure of his owner, but with the sole restriction that a Christian was not to be made over to a pagan.

It appears the freeing of a slave was attended with some ceremony. It was enacted in one of the following places, and in public—in the market-place, in the court of the hundred, or in the church at the foot of the principal altar. The owner of the slave took his hand, offered it to the bailiff, sheriff, or clergyman, and handing to him a sword and a lance, intimated to him that the ways and gates were open, and that he was at liberty to go wheresoever he felt disposed.

Many slaves were exported to Ireland and Scotland by the Anglo-Saxons, but as soon as William the Conqueror ruled the country, he sternly repressed the practice. Bristol was the last town in England to hold a slave-market. Wulfustan, Bishop of Worcester, who died in 1095, did much to repress it by his powerful preaching against the barbarity and irreligion of dealing in slaves. "At last," it is stated, "the merchants were convinced by his reasons, and in their guild solemnly bound themselves to renounce the trade. One of the members was soon afterwards tempted to violate his engagement. His perfidy was punished by the loss of his eyes." At the time of the Domesday Survey, the toll in the market-place of Lewes in Sussex was for the sale of an ox one penny, and fourpence for that of a slave.

No sooner had Edward VI. got on the throne than the following statute was made—"That a

runaway, or any one who lived idly for three days, should be brought before two justices of the peace, and marked V with a hot iron on the breast, and adjudged the slave of him who brought him for two years. He was to take the slave and give him bread, water, or small drink, and refuse meat, and cause him to work by beating, chaining, or otherwise; and if within that space he absented himself fourteen days, was to be marked on the forehead or cheek, by a hot iron, with an S, and be his master's slave for ever; second desertion was made felony. It was lawful to put a ring of iron round his neck, arm, or leg. A child might be put apprentice, and, running away, become a slave to his master." Coming still further down the stream of time until we are at the year of grace 1660, we then reach the period of the downfall of the slavery of English-born people in their native land, for servitude ended for ever in this country.

Although we have reached the time when Englishmen were no longer slaves here, we, through the medium of the newspapers, get glimpses of negroes still being sold in this country. If we turn over the advertising columns of the old newspapers we shall discover announcements similar to the following, copied from the *London Gazette* of 1688: "Run away from his master, Captain St. Lo, the 21st instant, Obdelah Elalias Abraham, a Moor, swarthy complexion, short frizzled hair, a gold ring in his ear, in a black coat and breeches. He took with him a blue Turkish watch-gown, a Turkish suit of clothing that he used to wear about town, and several other things. Whoever brings him to Mr. Lozel's house in Green Street shall have a guinea for his charges." Here is another notice of a runaway slave, extracted from the same journal for 1694. "A black boy, an Indian, about thirteen years old, ran away the 8th instant from Putney, with a collar about his neck, with this inscription: 'The Lady Bromfield's black in Lincoln's Inn Fields.' Whoever brings him to Sir Edward Bromfield's at Putney shall have a guinea reward." It may be inferred from the frequency of advertisements like the foregoing that slaves very often ran away from their owners. We find in the *Tatler* of 1709 the following: "A black boy, twelve years of age, fit to wait on a gentleman, to be disposed of at Denis's Coffee-house in Finch Lane, near the Royal Exchange." In the *Daily Journal* of September 28th, 1728, it is stated: "To be sold, a negro boy, aged eleven years. Enquire of the Virginia Coffee-house, Threadneedle Street, behind the Royal Exchange."

The following, extracted from *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 1771, is the last advertisement perhaps of a slave for sale in England:

"November 11, 1771. To be Sold by Auction, on Saturday the 30th day of November, instant, at the House of Mrs. Webb, in the City of Lichfield, and known by the Sign of the Baker's Arms, between the Hours of Three and Five in the Evening of the same day, and subject to Articles that will be then and there produced (except sold by private Contract before the Time), of which Notice will be given to the Public by John Heeley, of Walsall, Auctioneer and Salesman. A Negro Boy from Africa, supposed to be about Ten or Eleven Years of Age. He is remarkably strait, well-proportioned, speaks tolerably good English, of a mild Disposition, friendly, officious, sound, healthy,

fond of Labour, and for Colour, an excellent fine Black. For Particulars enquire of the said John Heeley."

A year after the foregoing advertisement appeared, namely, in 1772, a slave named Somerset was brought to England, but on account of ill-health was cast adrift by his master; happily the poor fellow came under the notice of Mr. Granville Sharp, who restored him to health. His master again claimed him, but after a trial at the Court of King's Bench it was decided that slavery could not exist in Great Britain.

MR. CLIFFORD GORE'S ADVENTURE.

BY PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON.

IT was certainly no charming atmospherical effect which thrilled Mr. Clifford Gore, barrister by profession, as he sat alone in his chambers this sixteenth of February, on which my narrative begins. A more disreputable day it would have been impossible almost to have imagined. It was a fitting offspring of a bad mother, for had not that mother raved and rained from the birth hour to the death one. But the child was worse. It was the difference between a lively drunkard and a sodden one. The mother had been obstreperous, virulent if you like it, and the voice of her had been heard about the land; but the child was abject. It was dark with a brooding, furtive, sinister gloom. It was warm-breathed, it was dirty. The rain streamed down with no wind to divert it, only the puddles as the big drops fell into them trembled a little. The crowded London streets washed clear of mud and dust for this reason sounded louder than usual, as they always do in a big rain. It was about four in the afternoon. Mr. Clifford Gore sat alone in his chambers. He was not a very busy man, having private means of his own. He had arisen late, having been late the night before in retiring. He had taken breakfast, not very much; he had gone through his paper after the way of all good Englishmen. He had written letters, he had gone partly through a French novel, he had gazed out from time to time at the streaming court into which the window looked. Within the centre of it, one tall, misshapen, gaunt tree looked even more forlorn than just then Mr. Clifford Gore felt, which was saying a good deal. He flung his book away, and leaning back in his chair began to smoke. Gore was about thirty-five. He was tall and broad-chested, and held himself well. His face was refined, although it presented no appearance of noticeable intelligence. His eyes, which were changeable in colour, could look very tender at times, as more than one woman had found out. He was a lonely man, was Clifford Gore, albeit he was always most warmly welcomed at his club; yes, though he was sought after, and worshipped by very young men with whose joys, and what they sometimes called their temptations, he so genuinely sympathized, and yet all the time managed to advise; yes, in spite of those well prepared little dinner parties at his chambers, and all the fun afterwards, and what his friends called "Gore's wonderful spirits." How about it, oh,

my discerning friends when the door was closed and the light turned out? Think you he went to bed with song and laughter on his lips? His best friend, Harry Standmore, had been in America on important business for a year, and some years prior to his forming this friendship, the girl to whom Gore was engaged had died quite suddenly while on a visit to some friends in London, where she really passed most of her time, as her mother was dead, and between herself, step-mother and father, a strict country clergyman, there was little sympathy. Alice Braille had met Gore through these friends who rented a house in one of our respectable, if not one of our most fashionable, squares. Yes, there one spring evening, when they were by chance alone in the twilight, it had all come to pass. It was a fine evening, charged with what Wordsworth so finely styles

"The mighty ravishment of spring."

In the quiet square a man's voice could be heard at a little distance almost as it were intoning the words—

"Fine flowers, fine flowers, all a-growing and a-blown; fine flowers, fine flowers." And further away, still so far indeed as to be only just audible, a street piano was playing a tune just then very popular, but I have no intention of dwelling on this evening. I have only mentioned Gore's passed romance, because what follows compels me to do so. Is it any pleasure to me to get you up your dead from underground, strip off shroud, and put on them fragrant evening dress, cut low, with flowers in abundant hair and bosom? No, as far as I am concerned, let them lie where they were buried; but if of their own accord they will get up and walk, and their doing so greatly affects some one of whom I have to tell you, the fault is not mine if I have been forced to talk a little of ghosts.

I do not mean to imply that Gore's life was blighted on account of the pretty dead woman. He had fancied others, and had had, too, his good times with them, but all had ended in smoke. He had no relatives, that is, none that he cared for, so that was how he came to be a lonely man, and sometimes a haunted one. This particular afternoon the ghost of his dead love persisted in walking with dreadful pertinacity. He couldn't finish his French novel because she would look over his shoulder. Why could you not, my little lady, keep quiet underground? Were that not better than to come up into this lond wet London; better, I should think; but there she was. She touched his hand with hers; she brushed his face with her flower-scented hair. One day, strictly chaperoned, of course, she had attended a breakfast party at these very chambers. That chair to the right was the very one which she had occupied, and now over the back of it, just where her dainty silken-covered shoulders had pressed, a shooting-coat had been hastily flung. Suddenly, as if he could bear his own reflections no longer, Gore got up, knocked the ashes from his pipe, drew on his top coat, and went out into the dismal unholly evening, but not because he needed to go anywhere. It was of course too early to dine; he knew many people would be at home and glad to see him, but just then he wanted to see no one. If he wanted anything, it was, in spite of the evening, to get a walk before dinner. In a word,

he wanted to get away from his ghost, but while he stood there wondering and debating with himself as to which way he should turn, his ghost had followed, and stood beside him at the street's corner. There was nothing of the churchyard about her, indeed, she had on the most becoming hat, a long feather sweeping her dark hair, and a stylish, close-fitting waterproof. She had chosen to remind him of a day very much like this one, when, having met in the heart of London by appointment, they had defied the elements, and walked back to her friends together, and now without even so much as a whispered word, for the sweet lips can frame no word, she compels him to turn in that old direction, and to walk again the way he had walked with her before she had become a ghost.

Ah me, how they had laughed and chatted, just as if there were no such things as doctors and coffins and undertakers-men in the world. How proud he had been of his dainty little love. How quickly the walk had seemed to terminate, and they found themselves in front of No. 12, Maudly Square; but of course he looked in just for a minute, and of course he had been made to stay dinner. Now he goes the same way, but with a ghost at his side. There is no chatting and laughing to-day. Only the dull roar of the streets. Lumbering omnibuses, madly dashing hansom, foot-passengers in imminent danger of being run down, newspaper-boys calling out the latest news, and all round the warm humid air and the down streaming rain. Then at last comparative quiet, except for a church clock striking five, and he is standing in front of No. 12, Maudly Square, N.W. Yes, it is the same house, over the threshold of which his feet have passed so many times. He had not seen the house for very many days, for when his pretty little sweetheart died, her friends went to reside abroad. Houses like persons can go downhill very quickly. From a well-kept private house to the boarding-house of even the most respectable type, is a great descent, and this descent number twelve had made. It was unmistakably a boarding-house. How dreary the square looked with its leafless, dripping trees. A few people passed him by under sodden umbrellas. A postman came up, knocked at the door, dropped a goodly number of letters into the box, and went on his round. Then a great desire to knock at the door himself just as he used to do took hold of Gore. And why not? he could ask for some imaginary person. Smith would do very well. He would ask if Mrs. Smith was in. After so many years his hand fell again upon the knocker. It was a good old-fashioned knocker, easy to wield, and its summons was soon answered by a decidedly pretty house-maid, to whom Gore put his question, and was answered in the affirmative, and with a smile as if his advent had been some time looked for. There was nothing to do but go through with it. He would feign to be one of those persons who go about getting ladies to be patronesses of fancy bazaars. He thought the idea a good one, as he followed up the stairs, and was shown into a small sitting-room. He recognized it at once as being that which had been entirely devoted to Miss Braille, and known as her study. He had no card with him, so the housemaid took his name, and left him alone. Alone? Quite alone except for the poor wet

ghost that had come in with him, and was kneeling in front of the fire. In the adjoining room, which he knew to be the front drawing-room, and now evidently the public drawing-room, where the elderly boarders doubtless made up whist parties in the evenings, some one was playing "Carmen," and not playing it very well. He was wondering how he should begin, when he heard the soft *frou-frou* of a woman's dress, and, turning round, he saw that the door had opened, and he was no longer alone.

At the same time a very beautiful voice, with a very special magic of its own, said—

"I am so very glad you have been able to make your way up to me. I was afraid you would forget my address, especially as I told you, I think, that I was going to take apartments in a more westerly direction. I only came here till I could get more suitable apartments."

"I don't think you did tell me, you know," he said, with one of his pleasant slow smiles. Should he reveal everything? Perhaps, if she had been a different kind of woman to look at, he might have done. The truth is he wished to linger on and talk, or to speak more correctly to look. Mrs. Smith may have been a year or two younger than himself. Her figure was superb for all those who delight in noble proportions. She carried herself proudly, and walked with an undulating grace of movement which was as much her own as her voice was, and the clear-cut face and the eager violet eyes. The passionate mouth revealed a nature assuredly sensitive. The hands with their blue-veined wrists were slender but withal strong-looking. She was dressed in a heavy, long, closely-fitting dress of silk and velvet, the skirt of which seemed to curl round her limbs and to fall as it were caressingly over her feet. She had old lace about her wrists and a large pearl locket hung at her neck. Is it any wonder that he liked well to gaze? In her low thrilling voice was the capacity for tears and mirth.

"Were you at Lady Selton's last Thursday?" she asked. She went on to say that she thought them such delightful afternoons. One met so many intellectual people there and people that one had heard of, and then she asked him in mock deprecatory tones if it was very vulgar to be interested in seeing the novelists whose books you had enjoyed or the painters whose pictures you had admired.

"They are very much like other people, are they not?" he said.

"Yes, and do you know I am so very glad they are. When I first came to London, I had lived most of my life in the country, and, indeed, pass a good deal of my time there still. I thought they would be somehow very different from other people, instead of which I find I can talk with them quite well."

"In fact, then," answered Gore, with a laugh, "your fear of the wild animal has gone, now that you have bearded him in his den."

From this the conversation turned to Carlyle's hero-worship, and over Carlyle the man and Mrs. Carlyle the woman, they had a most animated conversation. Then tea was served, and Mrs. Smith said she had been so much interested as not to have called for the lamp, but they both agreed the firelight was pleasanter. At length what was unmistakably the sound of a dinner-

bell caused Mr. Gore to spring up with an exclamation of surprise. He apologized for what he called his unpardonable visitation, as, if she had known all, she would most probably have thought it; instead of which she thanked him very much and said she hoped he would come and see her very soon again when she got into her rooms in Half Moon Street, which would be in the course of next week. He said he should hasten to do so, and then asked, just as he turned to leave, with a well-assumed air of carelessness, if she would be at Lady Selton's next Thursday, to which she said she thought not. "I don't go every Thursday, you know."

There was a smell of fish and roast mutton in the house as he came down into the hall, over which the boarders were making merry. He wondered if she would go down and sit among them, or have the meal served in her own room.

He put on his coat and went out into the wet night. The first thing he did was to light a cigarette, and the first thing the rain did on meeting him again was to extinguish it; but he heeded not.

He sucked on at the wet paper with as much satisfaction as if he had been smoking the best Egyptian ever rolled. In the course of time he became aware of the fact and cast the cigarette away, doubtless under the impression that he had smoked it right through to the end. Then he drew himself up suddenly at a street corner, having first almost collided with a drunken man who was declaiming in the centre of the pavement something about the rights of the people. He called a hansom and drove to his club, where he dined, and where he met a man he wanted most particularly to see. The man was no other than Becksley, the rising young artist. The two men were very good friends.

"Becksley," my dear boy, he began, "you have it in your power to do me a great service."

"Only too glad if it's in my power," returned the other.

"I think you can. I am pretty sure you know Lady Selton, and, though I am not a distinguished person, I want you most especially to take me there next Thursday. Can you manage it?"

"Manage it! Oh, yes, very easily! No one is more hospitable than she. Any friends of her friends are always welcome. Though I must say the result is very often a fearful crush, but come by all means, and see the little wigs and the big wigs playing side by side."

When Mr. Gore reached his chambers that night he had lost his ghost in a most satisfactory way. The beautiful stranger had enthralled him. She had taken captive every sense he had. He of course suspected what had happened. She had doubtless met many people at Lady Selton's to whom she had accorded permission to call. Like many another person she had probably a bad memory for names and faces, and had at once concluded that he was somebody whom she had met at Lady Selton's, and who had asked if he might not call. It was absolutely essential then for him to get an introduction to Lady Selton, and preferably when there would be no risk of Mrs. Smith seeing the introduction.

At length Thursday came, and Clifford was taken and duly presented, and he got on very well, because he was one of those people who know

many things superficially and not one thoroughly. The next Thursday he went on his own account. Almost the first person he perceived on entry was the beautiful Mrs. Smith, to whose side he hurried. Firstly, because he wished to be with her for his own pleasure. Secondly, because he wanted to avoid the chance of being re-introduced by Lady Selton, who had doubtless introduced the person whom she supposed him to be. Then a man not at all unlike Gore, though, of course, with many differences, came up and said—

"You don't know how sorry I am, Mrs. Smith, not to have been able to call last week, and as you said you were going to move to Half Moon Street, I thought there was no good calling when the week was out. I knew I should meet you here, and hoped you would give me your new address."

"Most surely," she said graciously, and added, with a smile at Gore—"You see I did tell some one I was going to move, or other people may have better memories than you. For myself I have a most shocking one."

In a short time she was surrounded by people well known in art and letters, and Gore had to give way, but, like a good Briton, he held on, and was rewarded by being able to see her into her carriage.

"Come soon," she said when she had given him her number in Half Moon Street.

"How soon?"

"As soon as you like."

"Would to-morrow be too soon?"

"Not at all."

"Would four be too early?"

"Four? Well, perhaps we had better say half-past."

"Half-past four then; but I mustn't keep you in the cold."

"I think you ought to go back to your young lady in blue. Very aesthetic is she not? To-morrow we will finish our talk about Carlyle. Good-bye."

He returned to the drawing-room, where he acquired from Lady Selton some information about Mrs. Smith. It was not much, but quite enough for him. She came of a good old English family, was a widow, had not been particularly happy in her married life, which, however, had not been of long duration; was believed to have plenty of money; a fine, but very excitable, nature. She had the reputation of being one of the most beautiful and charming of women.

The next day found Gore closeted with the beautiful widow, his mind made up for at least two hours' unmitigated delight, and he was not disappointed. He told her all about himself, and there is hardly anything more delightful or fascinating than talking of oneself to the woman with whom, for the time, we chance to be in love, and she being a woman of very quick sympathies, things went ahead at a good pace, and when they parted it seemed to one of them that they were already a good deal more than old friends.

As Mrs. Smith dressed for dinner that night, surveying, not without pleasure be it said, her fair semblance in the mirror, she said to herself, "That fellow rather likes me, I think," and there was a bright light in her eyes and a soft rose spot on either cheek, suggesting that she found the thought a not unpleasing one.

"Of course its nothing more than passing

fancy," she added, "but it is nice to be so much admired," and when her maid had dressed her in shimmering evening dress, which showed her fair neck and arms, she (the maid) declared it to be a shame that her mistress should have to wear anything else.

After this Gore and Rose Smith met frequently, and they began to exchange needless letters, and we all know what that means; and he began to bring books to her, and only to be happy when he was in her presence and alone with her too, if you please, and we all know equally well what that means. In society they confessed to being sound friends. In private they confessed to being dear friends, and though Gore did not attempt to conceal his admiration, he said no compromising word because he deemed the time not yet ripe, and as in his inmost heart he was not without hopes, he was careful to say nothing which might dash them prematurely to the ground. So February and March went by, and brought April with people coming to town in earnest, and it brought a certain sixteenth when these two happened to be together in Mrs. Smith's apartment. The light of failing day was low, but not so low that they could not see each other. A sudden impulse came over Gore, and he said—

"Rose," they had got to calling each other by their Christian names when there was no one present, "It is two months since I first saw you, and I want to make a confession. It is very bad; will you hear it?"

"Don't be foolish," she said with a laugh. "Did you ever know of a woman who was not wild to hear confessions?"

"No, I don't think I did," he said in a musing tone; and then he told the facts of his meeting her as we know them, and just why he had so much wanted to enter the house. He had not mentioned before the little dead lady whose ghost had brought him there that day.

The confession over, she kept silence, and he saw that her face had darkened.

"Rose," he cried, coming very near, "are you offended?—do you think me an impostor?"

"No, I don't think you an impostor, because of the way in which you made my acquaintance. The deception into which you were led was a harmless one. You were a gentleman, and there was no reason why I should not have known you as well as the many people who wished to know me, and for some one of whom I certainly did mistake you."

"Then why are you angry with me?"

"I am not angry, but I think that, having had such a close friendship in your life before, you should not have sought mine as you did."

He laid his hands on hers, but they were cold and she drew them away, saying, "Don't, I am not even to have a friend that is all my own."

"Rose, Rose," he cried, all his heart beating in his voice, "My love for you, why any longer try to cloak it under the name of friendship, is, compared to that boyish dream, as sunlight to a taper. I loved them as a boy, now I love as a man. Oh, my dear love, say there is some hope for me."

In another moment he was beside her on his knees kissing her hands madly. Did her's pass over his hair? Did she lean over him or did he draw her down to him? And then did their lips meet and cling? All I know is that Mr. Gore

paid a longer visit in Half Moon Street than when he came he had expected to make, and yet, oh strange contradiction of things, no call there before had ever seemed so short to him.

Two persons had never seemed more suited to one another, for Clifford Gore was a man of iron nerve, and yet withal tenderness, and she, now he came to know her, if most loving, was still wayward and exacting. Capricious as an April day's bright sunshine, alternating with thunder showers. But Gore, as if he had been born to understand her moods, was never betrayed into saying a harsh word though she would often accuse him of not loving her, though she would delight to steep herself in the admiration of other men, though she would be jealous both of dead and living and in both cases utterly without cause. Sometimes he found her trying and from his knowledge of women he suspected very strongly that she was not loving him with the intensest love of her nature. A love which had certainly not been lavished on her husband. On whom then? But to broach the subject only angered her as it did if he only suggested the fact of her having had some earlier and more romantic interest.

So like the stout-hearted strong man he was he resolved to hold her by his power of patience and devotion. He saw that she was interested in poetry and he knew that he was not, but he let her read it to him. She was fond of reading aloud. Then he would make some stupid remark, meant to be appreciative.

She would fix her soft violet eyes on his face, and say, with the utmost gravity—

"Indeed!"

Then she would discuss his remark in the same grave spirit, till a quivering round the corners of her lips would show that she had but been laughing at him.

This might have angered a more sensitive man, but he would only laugh, and say—

"Yes, sweetheart, you're right to laugh at me. I am an idiot about poetry. You must try and teach me," and she would answer, with a soft sigh—

"You're a dear fellow, but I don't think it would be any good. Let us go now and drive; that you can do well."

Then they would have a happy hour or two driving in the Park.

I should tell you also that Mrs. Smith's mother, a dreadful old lady who told you one story twice in the course of every half hour, had been brought from the country to look after the proprieties.

One day Rose said, looking up in his face, "You are very good to me I think."

"I could never be good enough," he answered, touching for a moment her exquisitely gloved hand. They were out driving, and she had been in one of her most wayward, almost bitter, moods. He controlled his temper just as well as he controlled his horses. He had that quality of which Mrs. Smith had no vestige herself, but which she was fond of demanding in others—namely self-restraint. On her birthday, the 10th of June, he brought her a goodly present of jewellery. She admired it and she thanked him, but her heart was bitter within her, because he had not remembered her predilection for a certain kind of rose. She liked the jewels, but she would have valued

more the poetic sentiment which would have taken notice of her least liking. That day, when the birthday banquet had been concluded, she told him so. He felt very much ashamed of himself and sent her a superb basket the next day, but she knew they had been sent at her suggestion, and they had no grace nor fragrance for her. In a fit of petulance she gave them to her maid. He only looked grieved, and said—

"I am sorry, dear, for not remembering before that you liked them so much."

"So am I," she answered, and went to her bedroom, where she remained shut up all the afternoon, while Gore was left to the tender mercies of his future mother-in-law. When at last his beloved came down she wore at her breast a small gold locket, on which some undecipherable letters were shaped in diamonds.

Her lover remarked it was a pretty locket, one he had not seen before, and asked if it was a gift. She assented.

"From whom?" he asked.

"Ah! that I cannot say."

"That is, you will not say."

"As you like it."

He saw that if he pressed matters there would be a storm. So he simply said, "You have a right to your secret, my dear. I am sorry to have asked you any questions." Then came a very great trouble of tenderness into her eyes. The dinner was not yet served, and they were alone. She rose from the couch where she had been sitting and came swiftly to where he was standing, took both his hands in hers and pressed them against her heart.

"Bless you, bless you, my darling," he said, and bending down kissed the soft flower-scented hair. Surely his patience had been rewarded. He knew there was much in him that she had to pardon, and he determined that if he could not raise in her such a passion as he felt sure she must once have known, he would give her at least perfect rest and contentment, and he thanked whatever power had created him for his strong nerves on which she could lean as on his strong arm.

One night when they were driving back to her house from a ball where Rose had much flirted, she said to him, "Not easily jealous, are you?" and he answered—

"But being wrought perplexed in the extreme."

"You are a conceited old fellow," she said, "and that is why you are not jealous; besides, I am not your wife yet."

"Yes, but you will be in a month's time."

"I suppose so, dearest," and she drew close to him and leaned her cheek against his. Then the carriage stopped in front of the house in Half Moon Street, and Gore, lighting a cigar, strolled away through the delicious May dawn with that subtle nameless fragrance in the air, by which the great city is often visited at such times.

On the whole those were good days for Gore, in spite of his sweetheart's frequent waywardness, in spite of being walked about picture galleries, in spite of being read to, in spite of being taken to places to hear talk about subjects which he did not in the least understand; still, was not life wonderful and romantic, and the time of the year helped the lovers. I am sure it is much better to love in June than in dark January days. All the good things of that season, even the abundant fruits, become a part of it.

The fifth of July was a day memorable for its heat. There was not a breath of wind, and the sun blazed down out of a dazzling sky, as if it were doing its best to burn up the world under its pitiless glare. The London pavements gave forth a smell and fume, the water from the water-carts all but turned to steam. In the country, cases the next day were reported of labourers falling down dead. In London, many shops closed, and people who had intended to remain in town till the end of the month, fled to the seaside, and almost died in getting there. I have dwelt a little on the character of this day, because it was one destined to be long remembered by Clifford Gore and two other persons. Mrs. Smith said it was out of the question in such weather to fulfil any of their numerous engagements, as they were none of them dinner engagements.

Gore presented himself about five in the afternoon. He found Rose resting on a sofa.

"Fan me," she said, "and don't say anything; it's too hot to talk. I wish you could read poetry, but you can't." "Oh dear," and she laughed a little, "I don't believe you can even play the flute."

"Or the concertina," he said gravely.

"Can you do anything but ride and drive well?" she asked, looking at him with something of wonder in her eyes, and speaking in a tone half serious, half bantering.

"I can do such things as you tell me," he answered.

"Yes," she said musingly, "you can and that is much."

All that afternoon she was naturally listless. Tea and dinner were over, Rose's mother, as usual at that hour, obligingly asleep in the next room, thus leaving the lovers alone. The room was faintly lighted by a rose-shaded lamp. Rose was again reclining on a sofa, and her lover kneeling beside her. Presently she asked, breaking silence:—

"Why don't you say pretty things to me? You can look unutterable things, but you can say nothing."

"I suppose, my dear, because I am not clever."

"Somebody," she went on, without noting his reply, "used to say that I had no right to live, because I was so dangerous to the peace of men, and that it wasn't fair to other women, and that I had only to hold up my hand to make lovers leave their sweethearts and husbands their wives. That my voice moved him more than it would do to hold any other woman, however beautiful, in his arms."

"He was a poet," answered Gore, "but in this case he did but say truth, which is more than most poets do."

"He wrote but was too proud to publish, knowing he could not equal others."

Just then came a tap to the door and a servant announced Mr. Standmore.

An exclamation of intense surprise burst from Gore, for Standmore was his great friend whom he had deemed in America. The two men shook hands. Rose sat up, but seemed transfixed, unable to speak or make any further movement.

"Well," said the new comer who had a rather highly pitched but not unmusical voice, "Have you no welcome for an old friend come back from the other side of the Atlantic?"

"It took my breath away at first to see you,"

she said, smiling faintly, and rising with an obvious effort, and then she added with something almost like a sob, "Indeed, indeed, I am so glad to see you again. How came you never to mention Standmore to me?" she asked, turning to Gore.

"I don't know how I did not come to mention his name. I have often told you of my best friend who was in America, but you never seemed to wish for details."

Standmore was a slightly-built man, with a bright, rather bold, animated face. He had much warm brown hair and dark glowing eyes. In hers there was a dancing light which Clifford had never seen there before.

"Well," he began, "I only reached London today and heard the good news at the club, and so thought I must come and congratulate my dear old friends. Do you remember how we parted?" he said, addressing himself to Rose, "how you wished to kill me."

"You don't do well to remind me," she said, speaking with concentrated bitterness, her eyes flaming angrily. "I tell you, Harry Standmore, that when I think of your sneers I wish I had killed you."

"But I very near killed myself afterwards."

"Very likely, but you didn't, you know."

"That is very true," he said; "I always thought you did your share of the sneering pretty well, but to weep over the dead body of a man just because he was your husband, that I could not make out in you."

"And I was quite content for you not to make it out," she retorted with a laugh.

"And so, Gore, we parted in a whirlwind and I went to America. Have you told him?"

"No, I have not."

"I think I ought to know," said Gore.

"I quite agree with you," said the other, and he went on: "I had once the supreme honour and happiness of regarding this lady as my future wife; but while I was more in love with her than all the other loves she had melted into one, there were things in her that angered my hot temper, as there were no end of things in me that angered her, so in a quarrel she broke off our engagement and married a man she did not love. After his death she chose to wax sentimental about him. That angered me, and, as I have said, I went to America. She would marry you as she did the other fellow, but I am here to stop it."

Gore sprang to his feet, but the other went on:

"She may persuade herself for a little while that she likes you. There are ways in which you would suit her; but I know you both, and I know that in time she would weary even of your forbearance. Rose, tell this man we shall always love one another, though at times we almost tear each other to pieces."

She answered quietly, "I am engaged to Mr. Gore;" adding, after a pause, sadly, "he has been better to me than ever you have been or ever would be."

"But Rose," said Standmore, coming over and gazing into her eyes as if he were looking down into her very soul, "Rose, my heart's queen, you love me."

"I must trouble you to leave us, sir," said Gore very coldly. "This can only be painful to Mrs. Smith."

"I have no intention of going till I have seen this lady alone."

Gore looked at his beloved with dreadful earnestness, and said, his voice trembling a little—

"Rose, is he or am I to leave the room?"

For a while her lips laboured before speech came, and then she said in tones that could just be heard—

"Forgive me if you can. For your own sake it is better you should leave me. What he says is true. I do love him—oh, a hundred times more than my own soul, or chance of heaven in another world, if he were not there."

The next moment her face was buried on Standmore's shoulder, and he felt on his hands the rapturous tears of reconciliation.

Nothing sensational happened to Clifford Gore. He did not even catch a fever. He never married, and grew slightly cynical, as old bachelors are apt to do. On the whole, did he or did he not regret his adventure? Who shall say?

A TONTINE OF TWO.

BY HUGH COLEMAN DAVIDSON.

WHEN Richard and John Graham started in business as partners, they executed a joint deed by which the survivor was to inherit the whole of the property. In fact, they formed themselves into a Tontine of Two, with the proviso that it could be dissolved at any time by mutual consent. It was Richard who suggested the deed, giving as his reason a wish to benefit his brother. John readily agreed to it for Richard's sake. "Though I am the younger," he said, "your health is better than mine."

There was, doubtless, some truth in these professions, for the brothers afterwards gained a reputation for commercial integrity, and they were not intolerably selfish. At the same time, neither was looking as far ahead as he pretended. The welfare of the firm being identical with that of the individual, each was actuated by a prudent desire to induce the other to work his hardest.

Hence it was that a scheme originating to some extent in self-interest promised to be generally beneficial. The Grahams made money rapidly; they were cautious, but not by any means timid in their speculations; and when their business career drew to a close, they could congratulate themselves upon an unbroken series of successes. Though they had not mounted to the lofty platform set apart for millionaires, they had attained a position of comfort. If any skeleton lurked in their cupboard, they were so little aware of the fact that they never once opened the door to examine it.

Naturally enough, their prosperity excited the envy of their brother George, who had a large family, and little to support it. It seemed to him a most unrighteous thing that fortune should be given to two mouldy old bachelors, while he could scarcely earn enough to feed the many mouths that clustered around his table at meal-time. To make matters worse, his frequent requests for assistance were not received in a very liberal spirit, and this added to his sense of injury. "His poverty," said the bachelors, "was entirely his

own fault; if he had remained single, he would have been as well off as they were." Though irritated at this absurd confusion of ideas, George pocketed the affront with the humility of a poor man.

I should mention that the birth of George's eldest son had raised rather a knotty point. It was thought that Uncle Richard might be offended if the child was christened John, and that Uncle John might be offended if the selected name was Richard. There is no need to enter into the lively discussion that arose upon this question of domestic economy; it will be sufficient to say that the child was eventually called Richard John as a delicate compliment to both uncles, though in later life he answered to the name of Dick. Rather more than a year after this event, another son appeared upon the scene, to re-open the old discussion. Alas! there is no such thing as finality on this revolving globe. Mr. and Mrs. George Graham were driven almost frantic between the wish to pay another pretty little attention to the bachelor brothers, and the necessity for doing it so as not to favour one at the expense of the other. The wildest ideas were mooted, rejected, and mooted again. It makes one shudder to think that the unfortunate infant only just escaped being Jonah Ricardo; a combination that at the last moment luckily suggested another, which had the merit of being simplicity itself. It was hailed as a stroke of consummate genius when the father proposed that the shapeless bundle he held in his arms should be called John Richard. His brilliant idea was carried into effect, and so the second son came to be known as Jack. The rest of the family happened to be girls; otherwise, George would have found himself in a dilemma, now that he had exhausted the permutations of Richard and John. As it was, however, he felt that the net was just wide enough to catch his fish with certainty. If Dick proved unattractive, there was Jack to fall back upon; together, they were pretty sure to captivate their bachelor uncles.

As soon as Dick could hold a pen, he began a course of affectionate letters to Uncle Richard and Uncle John alternately; and by-and-by an affectionate letter from Jack was regularly enclosed in the same envelope, which thus became a graceful token of love and thrift. If the boys had been questioned as to the object of learning to write, they would have replied, without hesitation: "To inquire after the health of uncles who never come to see us except on Christmas Day,"—a day of frightful penance to Uncle Richard and Uncle John.

Not that the communication between the two houses was confined to these letters. About once a month a couple of sturdy little fellows, attended by a nurse, might have been seen toddling through a quiet suburb to the detached villa where the brothers lived. They always stayed half-an-hour by the clock, and came out with brighter faces than when they went in. They were pleased with the half-crown that each clutched tightly in his chubby fist, but perhaps more pleased to escape from the formality that had bound their young limbs like iron fetters.

When they grew up they still continued these ceremonious visits, but here their acquaintance with their uncles began and ended. They often debated

whether the game was worth the candle, and only the insistence of their parents kept them up to the mark.

Of course George was extremely vexed at his want of success. He could not understand why he had failed to interest his brothers in his own family. It never occurred to him that the explanation lay in their increasing age, taken in conjunction with the deed and the gradual change which it had wrought in their characters. When they had been comparatively young death had seemed a contingency so remote that as business men they could leave it out of their calculations, but latterly each had awakened to the fact that it might overtake his brother. In brief, Richard regarded himself as John's heir, and John regarded himself as Richard's heir; consequently, both felt it their bounden duty to warn off poachers. The skeleton, you see, had begun to show its grisly head.

In personal appearance, the brothers were not unlike, except that Richard wore a short grey beard, while John's face was clean-shaven. They were very solid little men, with a cast-iron look about their heavy, regular features, and their solemn eyes seemed to require a long time to convey an impression to the brain. They both had deep lines from the nose to extremities of the firm-set mouth, and this gave them a certain resemblance to a pair of mastiffs. It was strengthened in John's case by a peculiar habit of hanging his arms a little forward when he walked. Everything about them, even their clothes, which were always of the same dark grey colour, denoted tenacity of purpose.

It was, therefore, a great surprise to everybody when they sold the goodwill of their business.

George was nearly startled out of his life. After this extraordinary proceeding, he said, they might even commit the iniquity of getting married. I really can't repeat the strong language he used on the subject to his wife, who made no attempt to stop him. They ended by persuading themselves that there undoubtedly was some designing young woman in the background, and they agreed that no time should be lost in demolishing her.

As a matter of fact, however, the two old bachelors were quite free from any malicious intention, marriage having never entered their heads. Indeed, if either had hinted at it, the other would have been as much aggrieved as George. One short sentence will explain their conduct both at this time and hereafter. To live was rapidly becoming the sole motive of their miserable lives. Finding the anxieties of business to be inimical to longevity, they had retired with the same wonderful unanimity that marked all their acts. Their money was invested partly in shares in a promising Bank and partly in the Funds; so nothing remained but to enjoy themselves. Their idea of enjoyment turned out to be more time to spend at the Club, more time for the daily constitutional, more time for the afternoon nap—in a word, leisure. No doubt it involved certain drawbacks, but their eyes steadfastly fixed on a single object could not foresee them.

As the Grahams were both whimsical, it had required a great deal of management to prevent clashing. They avoided all unnecessary friction by completely mapping out the house, which,

though not large, was quite large enough for their purpose. Each had his own separate suite of rooms where the other never intruded except by invitation. There was also a common room in which they dined together and smoked a quiet cigar afterwards, though even here each was attended by his own particular servant whose position was behind his master's chair. It was ridiculously formal, of course, and yet in their own staid undemonstrative way this singular pair were friendly enough. Knowing their own stubborn tempers, they merely thought it wise to guard against an accident which in their case would certainly be fraught with most disastrous consequences. Even the deed had not yet succeeded in sowing ill-will between them, so efficacious were their business-like arrangements. But the beginning of the end was at hand.

One afternoon, about a week after the firm of Graham Brothers had ceased to exist, George called at their house for the purpose of breaking up the conspiracy which, he was convinced, existed against himself. Hitherto he had regarded the deed merely as an unjust instrument for keeping his sons out of their rights as long as possible; but read by the light of the contemplated marriage of one of the conspirators, it assumed a very different aspect. If this married brother should be the survivor, as was not unlikely with a bright existence opened out before him, the whole of the property would go to his family, and George's would be defrauded of every penny. Thus it had become absolutely necessary to get the deed cancelled at once, so as to secure an any rate some chance of salvage. The chief obstacle to be overcome was the fact that Richard expected to outlive John, and John to outlive Richard.

George called first upon Richard, who inhabited the ground floor. He was shown into an old-fashioned room, not uncomfortable, and yet with an unmistakable stiffness about the furniture. An oil-painting of the bachelor brothers—the duplicate of one in John's room upstairs—hung over the marble mantelpiece, and the other pictures were arranged in a line with it. The books in the mahogany book-case displayed the same neatness. But the most striking characteristic of the room was its want of air, not a breath being allowed to sneak in. Every chink was carefully stopped; the door was padded round the sides; and red sandbags on the window completed the barricade against the ever-threatening attacks of death. Richard himself, like a grim old mastiff clad in a dressing-gown and carpet slippers, was seated by the fireside, though the weather was far from chilly. A thermometer lay on the table close by.

George advanced with outstretched hand, but drew back with a sudden start.

"Great heavens, Richard!" he exclaimed in horror. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" replied a deep bass voice. "What do you mean?"

"Why, I never saw a man look so ill in all my life."

Richard turned ghastly pale. It was some time before he felt able to growl out—

"I wish you wouldn't come here with your sickening nonsense."

"What, you're not ill, then!" said George, with an expression of vast surprise.

"Certainly not."

"Well, all I can say is, I never saw a man look worse. You really ought to see a doctor, Richard. I'll call John down, and ask his opinion." He moved towards the door.

But Richard rose from his chair and stopped him—an act strangely at variance with his angry assertions that he was in a perfect state of health. While strenuously denying any flaw in himself, he appeared to be afraid of being inspected by his brother. This became quite obvious at the end of a rather unpleasant interview; for, when George announced his intention of going upstairs to see John, he was requested to keep his suspicions to himself. He readily promised to do so.

John's sitting-room was furnished almost exactly like Richard's, but in one respect it presented a remarkable contrast. The door was open; the window was open top and bottom; and there was no fire in the grata. John considered fresh air to be the very essence of longevity, and like his brother, carried his crotchet to ludicrous extremes. His gray suit fitted loosely, so that a current of air might circulate around his body, and the holes in his boots were intended to serve a similar purpose.

George acted his cunning pantomime over again, and with precisely the same result, except that John threatened to kick him downstairs—a treatment he richly deserved. When he left, it was with a sense of satisfaction not altogether justified by the result. His mischievous words only made his brothers cling to the deed more tenaciously than ever, lest they should appear to be holding out signals of distress. For the first time, they began to distrust one another, as was shown by an unfortunate occurrence during the dinner-hour that evening.

John, followed by his servant, entered the common room a few moments before his brother. Perceiving the window to be shut, he ordered his man to open it. It was always kept open during the summer and closed during the winter; in the spring and autumn the two ruled the household by turns. In the present instance John was merely exercising his rights. But when Richard, also followed by his servant, arrived upon the scene, he glanced at the window, shivered, and sent his man to shut it. John remonstrated, taking his stand upon privilege. He was incautious enough to add that he objected to being stifled to death, to which Richard replied that he had an equal objection to losing his life by sitting in a gale of wind.

I forget how the incident terminated; but, paltry as it was, it bred unjust suspicions with all the vitality of reptiles, and eventually led to a complete rupture. Yet even then, the Grahams never once departed from their sedate demeanour. Instead of indulging in angry recriminations and leading a cat-and-dog existence, as some would have done, they met together in a business-like way and made their arrangements for the future. The house opposite being vacant, they took it, partially furnished it, and then drew lots to decide which should live in it.

The lot fell upon John. A couple of hours sufficed to transfer his belongings across the road. This done, he shook hands with Richard, and crossed over to his new home.

We now approach the last scene of this grim comedy. The desperate earnestness with which

the Grahams carried out their determination to outlive one another, clearly showed that sometimes, at any rate, life is worth living; and yet they reduced it to a series of arithmetical problems, which are seldom considered inviting. They ate by weight, drank by measure, walked by rule; sleep had become a matter of minutes carefully doled out by an alarm; even their reading was restricted to a definite number of pages daily lest their eyesight should be affected. In short, they were transformed into machines for the slow consumption of time.

At three o'clock every afternoon Richard started for a constitutional in one direction and John in another. When they happened to leave their houses at the same moment they always nodded, but never spoke. To the end of their lives the silence between them remained unbroken, not from any violence of feeling, but simply because of their characteristic prudence. Nevertheless each was kept thoroughly acquainted with everything done in the opposite camp, for the servants often met to discuss the situation. This partly accounts for the uniformity that still marked their master's acts.

If either met with a noteworthy specimen of antiquity, he never failed to interrogate him as to his manner of living. It was easy enough to obtain this information, but not so easy to reduce it to a system, and put it into practice. One day Richard discovered an old man of seventy-eight who had never tasted any alcoholic drink. He promptly became a teetotaller. But the very next afternoon he fell in with a veteran of eighty-two who unblushingly admitted that he could scarcely remember being sober. When the doctors disagreed in this strange way, it is no wonder that Richard was almost beside himself with perplexity.

There can be no doubt, however, that the single idea of this miserable old couple eventually developed into downright monomania. Richard got a notion into his head that music was the very thing to keep him alive; and accordingly instructed his man to pounce upon every strolling performer. Thus it came about that there was usually a German band, or an organ-grinder, or a cornet-player to be seen and heard in front of his house, and when his crotchet got wind, the street was regularly besieged by these uproarious vagabonds. It was a dreadful nuisance to the neighbours, but especially to John Graham, whose windows were always open. Moreover, he had discovered that deaf people generally live to a great age, and had thence drawn the deduction that noise would be fatal to himself. That Richard was hatching a dastardly plot, was the logical conclusion.

Though determined not to be done to death in this way, John felt it would only be prudent to nominate an heir. He therefore sent for his nephew Jack, now a strapping young fellow of two-and-twenty, and appointed him sole legatee. George chuckled; matters were going on swimmingly for him. His satisfaction was increased a few days later; for Richard, hearing what his brother had done, resolved to follow suit, and made Dick his heir. Unfortunately, the deed being still in existence, one of the two would have nothing to bequeath; so the grim contest between Richard and John took a more desperate turn, and

each of the combatants found a staunch backer in his heir. The natural result was a quarrel between Jack and Dick as to the merits of the respective principals: a quarrel that drove the young fellows from their home into separate lodgings. It was now their fathers' turn to wonder whether, after all, the game was worth the candle.

Matters were in this position when death, laughing at all precautions, sneaked into Richard's citadel, entrance being effected by means of that ready-made contrivance for the purpose—the milk-jug, beside which the wooden horse of Troy must take a very inferior place as an engine of destruction. As often happens with persons similarly constituted, John was taken ill at nearly the same time as his brother. In both cases the medical men in attendance pronounced the cause to be typhoid fever. The fixed resolve to live might have pulled the patients out of danger; but when they did show any signs of progress, their fears invariably pulled them back again. By degrees, fighting a terrible fight, which seemed to gather strength as theirs ebbed away, they were driven to the conviction that the inevitable end was approaching; yet even then neither could tell which would be the winner, so close were they together as they drew near to death's door.

One autumn evening, while the sunlight still lingered on the roofs of the houses nesting in their bright little gardens, a strange and perhaps unparalleled scene was enacted in that quiet suburb. The blinds of two rooms staring at one another across the road were partly drawn down, and in these rooms two white-faced foible old men lay dying, struggling hard to the last. Their dull eyes were riveted with pitiful eagerness upon the grave faces of their attendants, who occasionally stooped to administer a cordial, and their lips were tightened and hands clenched, as if they were running a race which demanded endurance rather than speed. The strain was evidently as much as they could bear; sometimes, indeed, they appeared to be on the point of breaking down, but recovered themselves by an almost superhuman effort. As time went by, the appealing eager look in their worn old faces gained intensity, but they husbanded their energies by preserving a strict silence. Never had the strength of the ruling passion in death been more forcibly exemplified.

There were also four men standing by each bed, two on each side of it. Richard was attended by his own doctor and his own lawyer. The other couple consisted of a doctor and a lawyer who were present in his brother's interests. Each of the doctors had a finger upon the patient's pulse, right or left as the case might be, and all the lawyers held watches, which had been carefully compared beforehand. At the bottom of the bed stood a table on which was a large musical-box, playing a succession of very popular airs. When it ran down, Richard's lawyer, whose anxious expression contrasted strangely with the impatience of his rival—a contrast also visible in the faces of the doctors—moved from his place and wound it up again.

The arrangement in John's bedroom was precisely similar, except that there was no musical-box, and the window was opened instead of closed.

At such a time, the two heirs—if they may be

called so when one would inherit all and the other nothing—were not likely to be far away. In Richard's sitting-room, Dick was anxiously pacing to and fro; in John's sitting-room, Jack was doing the same. Their emotions were too deeply moved to allow them to enter the chamber of death. They had tried reading, writing, sitting still, everything in turn, but it always ended in this restless march up and down the floor.

At last, Dick could endure the suspense no longer. Creeping quietly up the stairs, he whispered at the door—

"How is he?"

The dying man winced. Perhaps it struck him also that the game was hardly with the candle.

"Sinking rapidly," replied one of the doctors.

Dick bundled downstairs in the wildest alarm. His chance of wealth seemed to be slipping away before his eyes. He rushed to the window and glared at the house over the way, to catch Jack doing the very same thing. Both beat a hasty retreat, for they had not been on speaking terms for a long time.

After another half hours' torture, Dick repeated his former question.

"Can't last much longer," was the reply.

Jack had just received the same answer with regard to John Graham; so both young men were in a state of abject terror. Fortunately, a neighbour happened to call at Richard's house to make a friendly inquiry, and Dick, frantic to get hold of a confidant, instructed the servant to show him in.

He was a brisk little man, with frosty eyes and big red whiskers, a solicitor by profession, and Wimble by name. When the position had been explained to him, he immediately suggested a compromise. Why should not the two brothers sign an agreement to divide the property equally? Of course, it must be done at once before death could intervene to prevent it; otherwise the successful heir would never be brought to agree to it. They might be too late as it was, but the thing was worth trying.

Dick jumped at the idea with the greatest eagerness. He exhorted Mr. Wimble not to lose a moment and professed the most generous sentiments towards the brother from whom he had unhappily been estranged.

"Go—run—fly!" he cried, opening the door and pushing the solicitor out; after which, he dashed about getting pens, ink and paper in readiness.

Mr. Wimble found Jack quite as eager for a compromise as Dick. He brought the young man back with him; and with as little delay as possible sat down to draw out the agreement. Two servants who had been introduced to act as witnesses, stood near the door. The brothers looked on silently, the perspiration streaming from their foreheads. It had now become a question of minutes. Though the lawyer's pen raced along the paper, they thought him intolerably tedious. Any moment his task might be arrested and rendered useless. Such was their excitement that they could scarcely breathe for watching.

Upstairs, in the room where the musical box was playing merrily, the solemn quartette were grouped in the same attitude around a figure from which the life seemed to have departed. Only the doctors could tell that it was not so, and even they were sometimes obliged to withdraw their fingers from the pulse and apply them to the heart. The expression of the dying man had

hardened rather than softened; it showed an invincible determination as marvellous as it was terrible. At frequent intervals, one or another of the lawyers, still holding a watch in his hand, glided to the window and looked out; but there was no sign from the house opposite, and not a person in sight, except a telegraph-boy whistling his way along the dusky road.

The musical box stopped. Before it could be wound up again, the doctor, who was present in John's interests, exclaimed—

"He's gone at last. Note the time!"

"No, sir, he lives!" returned the other doctor warmly.

"But—"

"Yes, yes, it's all over."

"Twenty-five minutes past eight exactly," said both lawyers simultaneously.

One of them moved to the window to pull down the blind, the signal agreed upon; but while he was in the act of doing so the blind was pulled down in the opposite house. Forgetting everything in the excitement of the moment—for it is not every day that a fine income rests upon a matter of seconds—all four rushed down into the road, where they were met by the other four in an equally excited state.

"Twenty-five minutes past eight exactly," cried one party.

"Twenty-five minutes past eight exactly," cried the other.

"A dead heat, then!"

"But what does that mean?"

Followed by Mr. Wimble, Dick and Jack came hurrying out to answer the question. The agreement had been signed and witnessed, so they felt no uneasiness on that score; but each was very anxious to learn whether he was a winner or a loser by the transaction. If the latter, he was quite prepared to assume an air of lofty patronage towards his brother—to behave, in fact, as if he had generously presented him with half the estate. On the whole, they were neither of them in a very charitable frame of mind.

Dick's progress was arrested at the gate by a boy, who handed him a telegram addressed to Richard Graham. Instead of opening it on the spot, he carried it across the road with him, and not until the situation had been thoroughly discussed did it occur to him to read it. The message consisted of two words—"Bank failed." Though Dick did not perceive their full significance, he was so alarmed that he read them aloud.

"Bank failed!" repeated Mr. Wimble, with a near approach to a smile. "In that case, I fear there won't be anything to divide between you two young gentlemen."

Jack and Dick were horror-stricken. Even the eight professional men who had taken such a great interest in the case looked a little queer. If, as that hasty cynical smile of his would lead one to suppose, Mr. Wimble spoke the truth, they would merely rank among the creditors of the estate, and perhaps not get a shilling in the pound. It really was too bad. With one accord they joined the army of doubters as to whether the game was worth the candle.

It certainly was not worth the candle in the case of the nephews. The bank in which Richard and John Graham had been large shareholders was unlimited, and its failure swallowed up nearly every penny they had left behind them.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

FOR THE KING.

BY J. LEITH DERWENT,

Author of "Circe's Lovers," "King Lazarus," &c.



CHAPTER I.

"THE MADDEST LITTLE JACOBITE."

"SO you laugh at my poor oak wreath!" she said, placing it daintily on her beautiful hair, that she wore, I used to thank heaven, free from the abominations with which our London fine ladies beplastered theirs. "Why, Harry?"

"I laugh at your hero, sweet cousin. A very natural thing that the young Prince should hide in a tree when Roundhead troopers were close on him, but what was there so heroic in his hiding?"

"It is his deliverance that we commemorate to-day, Harry—as even a Whig must surely know—and not his heroism."

"Well, there were heroes in those days."

"Yea, and their names were Charles and Rupert—Charles the martyr.

"Their names were Cromwell and Blake."

"Blake! Cromwell! She stamped with her small foot on the ground and her eyes looked lightnings at me. "Oh, Harry, to think that you—who, if a Whig, are at least a gentleman—should find anything to admire in a wretch like Cromwell!"

"And oh," I said, determined to provoke her, "that you should have eyes, Fairy, and yet should not see him as he was—as a hero who —"

She held up her hand to stop me. "Don't, Harry!" she said passionately, "don't say the rest, or we shall quarrel. I mean it—I do indeed."

For a while we both stood silent, around us the sweet companionship of roses, while overhead myriads of leaves murmured softly to the light June breeze, and bough after bough dipped down as if to drink of the clear waters of the Dart.

Sweetest of rivers! when I forget thee may Devon be a name to me only, and not the dearest and fairest of old England's shires.

I turned over in my mind for something to say that might appease the pretty Amazon beside me, and finding nothing more soothing than a new reference to the subject that had already provoked her, was fain at last to break silence with it—a trifle resentfully.

"You are a true woman, Fairy, you take good looks as a warrant for good deeds. If this poor Cromwell whom you hate so furiously had had the fair outside of Charles, and Charles the rough looks and manners of the man who conquered him, we should hear less from your sex of the woes of the Martyr King. It's the old old story, Fairy, as old as the days of Paris and Helen, the only way to a woman's heart lies through her eyes."

Fairy's anger had passed in a moment—when was it otherwise with that April nature?—and the look that she now flashed at me was only bright with mischief.

"Don't you think, Harry, that if you men had any hearts at all, the way to them would be much the same?" she asked. "Isn't it a melancholy fact that when a man goes forth to seek a wife he pays his court, not to the best girl he knows, nor the cleverest, nor the most sensible, but to her whose pretty face has caught his fancy?"

There was a wicked meaning in her words, and in the look that accompanied them, that I well perceived and that chafed me. "Yes, Fairy," I said slowly and looking full at her as I spoke, "yours is just the kind of face to catch one's fancy."

She laughed, but her cheek grew crimson as she turned from me. "Is that a compliment you are paying me, Harry? Ah! if I had lived seventy and some odd years ago, and had had twice as pretty a face as that my toilet-glass shows me when I peep in it, it might have caught the fancy of someone whose admiration would have been worth the having."

"Meaning Montrose, perhaps," I said, picking

out for her acceptance the noblest of all Cavaliers.

"Or Rupert," she said quickly. "Yes, Rupert would have been the knight to have worn my favourite colours for his sword-knot, and to have sent them back to me in token of his victory and his safety when the battle was won."

"He would have sent them back to you dyed of another colour than your favourite one, dear coz—except that colour were red. Fairy, you talk as lightly of war as of men, and know nothing of one or the other."

"I know this of Rupert, at least, that he was just the kind of man I could have loved. Ah, if my good fortune had but given me a stout cavalier of the Rupert breed for a cousin of mine, what an adventure I might propose to him!"

"What is it, Fairy?"

"You could not achieve it, Harry; it would have suited a man of our grandfather's days, one of the men who had swords by their side and not mere steel toys, and who had battlefields to draw them in, and who knew how to win honour or die gloriously."

"What is it, Mistress Fairy?"

"It is not for you, Harry; if dared at all, it will be dared by a man and a loyal subject of King James, not by a Whig and a boy."

"Boy!" I echoed, with the wrath of a Coriolanus.

"Yes, boy, Harry—what else are you in years?"

"Your elder, Mistress Fairy, by years enough to make me a man who will dare any danger you can point out to him, if only it will help him to your love."

She had turned away as I made that impulsive speech; and now began pulling to pieces a rose she had plucked, and spoke without looking at me. "A Rupert would have won my love," she said. "He would have disobeyed me when I forbade him ever to tell me again that he loved me, and only have wooed more boldly; and if I had lamented to him that I knew of an adventure and none bold enough to undertake it, he would have demanded of me on the instant what it was, and that same day I should have waved my kerchief to him in adieu, as he galloped off for London."

"For London! What errand can you have for me in London, Fairy?"

"None, Harry, for a Whig and a lawyer. A soldier—a Rupert—is the messenger I need."

"And when he returned, Fairy—when your Rupert—your soldier—galloped back to tell you that he had fulfilled your behest, sweet princess—what reward would you have for your knight? Might he dare claim it from your lips?"

But she only put to them what remained of the rose whose petals lay scattered round her, and without speaking, and with that emblem of silence still pressed to her lips, she gave me a wicked, provoking glance, and turned away.

Evelyn—known as "Fairy"—Leigh to a very few and favoured mortals beside her father, who had so rechristened her, but of which happy few I was one in right of cousinhood, had bloomed in this sheltered nook of Devon into as sweet a rose as ever England reared. Ah, for the right to wear her ever in my bosom! I had gone mad for the sake of her sweet face in the first moment that I looked on it again, after four years spent at the

University of Cambridge and afterwards in London, where I, a good Whig and sober Templar, had peaceably pursued that study of the law, which consists in keeping terms and eating dinners. But, alas! this stout Whig and sober barrister, on returning to his native county of Devon, had found his uncle's daughter transformed from a child of fourteen into a goddess of four years more, and had at once, and foolishly, gone down on his knees to worship her. A pretty plight for me, quiet Henry Ingram, to have lost both heart and head at the first look I got from the bright eyes of the maddest little Jacobite in all the West.

CHAPTER II.

A DANGEROUS MISSION.

I HAD dared speak of my love to Mistress Fairy a few days before the memorable 29th of May that saw her crown her bright locks with oak-leaves, and quarrel furiously with me over the Royal Martyr and the man who hurled him from his throne; and she had given me but mockery for all answer. "How much do you love me, Counsellor Harry?" she had asked me. "More than your law-books?" And when I had answered her in the high-flown speech that foolish lovers are quick to use, she had turned it into wild ridicule, and had fled from me, laughing. Whereon I had paced for an hour the quaint alleys of my uncle's garden, trying to find comfort in the sturdy sentiment of gallant George Wither:

"An she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be?"

But I sang the brave words dolefully enough; and her face would insist on rising before me as I sang, and the bright eyes and laughing lips were but the brighter and sweeter to my fancy because, as it seemed, the one would never look, nor the other whisper, a shy, sweet response to my tale of love. I was a love-sick, brain-sick fool, in short; and Mistress Fairy knew it, and the knowledge thereof amused her mightily.

In those days there was much disquiet in the country because of Jacobite plots. The rebellion of '15 was but a few years old as yet, and ghastly heads that had hatched treason along with the Earl of Mar, or Mr. Forster, yet mouldered on Temple Bar. 'Twill come, I hope, to be one day understood of both our factions, Whig and Tory, that the shame of such sights is not with the dead whose miserable relics are thus exposed, but with the Government that can brutally and foolishly seek to continue the punishment of treason even after death. Well, heads there were on Temple Bar, divorced from the bodies they had once belonged to, and other heads, not yet separated from the trunk, passed under that famous Traitor's Gate (as justly deserving of the name, I think, as the archway at the Tower), and looked up at the grinning skulls above, and were not deterred by the sight from plotting similar treason. No, among these latter eager Jacobites had been one Christopher Layard, a gentleman of the Temple, slightly known to myself. Poor Kit Layard! 'twas a gallant heart that beat in thy breast, and

a noble, if mistaken, sentiment of loyalty that animated it; and when I think what was to be the horrid doom of that manly heart, why, I grow for the moment an enemy to Whig government and the House of Hanover myself. But always there will come back on me the memory of the days of the later Stuarts, and what miseries many families—my father's among the number—had suffered then, and of two evils I am content to choose the less.

I am an old man now, and a garrulous. "Tis a proof of the latter quality that I have sat down to tell a story of my youth and my love, and have filled some sheets already with what should be my tale, but is not—being only, in a manner, the rambling preface to it. Ah! if this were but a poem instead of a plain prose narrative, and our English Juvenal were not a satirist whose scourge is now for ever laid by, how would Mr. Alexander Pope have lashed me for the sin of such prolixity, had I come under his merciless hands! Poor tale of a woman and a fool, had I penned thee twenty years back and in verse, though mightest have earned for me a whipping in much bad company at the tail of the Dunciad itself. But our dreadful little brilliant satirist is dead these six years—dead as poor Kit Layard, of whom I ought now to be writing, and not of Mr. Pope.

Kit had been in treasonable correspondence with the Jacobite leaders abroad, and there was a great plot afoot for another rising—of these two facts there was even too damning proof. So Kit was lying in Newgate now, heavily ironed and scantily fed, and dreadful Tyburn loomed before him as his certain doom. And meantime, I was making vain and passionate love to sweet Evelyn Leigh, down in woody Devon, and knew of nothing that should link the gallant, unhappy conspirator's fate with hers or mine. Had he been in any way akin to her, I might have expected to hear his name, from her, and to see tears of pity for his doom dim those blue eyes; but Kit was not.

And yet the very morning after that 20th of May, as I wooed Evelyn again to tell me what dangerous errand she knew of to send me to London on, and swore to be her messenger, I heard his name from her lips. "Oh, Harry," she said, "will they murder him?"

"Nothing can save him," I confessed. "Tyburn hungers for him."

Evelyn grew white, and all her gaiety dropped from her, as if it had been a mask. "Will they torture him?—will they rack him to make him tell them what he knows?"

"They will torture him at his death, indeed, but not before. What does he know?—and what in God's name can poor Christopher Layard be to you?"

"Not my lover, Henry, as your look declares—I never saw him in my life."

"What, then, is he?"

"A noble and unfortunate servant of his king and mine—no more. But he knows—"

"What, Evelyn?"

"I dare not tell it to you. You are of the Elector of Hanover's party—you are a bitter Whig."

"I am your lover, sweetest, before aught else; also I am, I hope, a gentleman. Whatever secret you may confide to me is as safe in my keeping as in yours."

"Oh, if I dared tell you! Listen, Harry—I do trust you, I will tell you—if—if, before I tell you, you will promise to be my faithful knight—to keep my secret and do my bidding both."

"To join in a Jacobite plot, cousin? That would not be your bidding to me, I trust?"

"Would the danger frighten you? You care more for your safety than for me!"

"I care for my honour, Evelyn. I will not blacken that—no, not to win you, Fairy—even you."

She looked up at me with radiant eyes. "Ah, if you had not said that to me, I would never have trusted you—never! But to help to save a life would not be to join in a plot."

"It might put my own life in nearly as much danger—and, to shew you that it is not my neck's safety I am thinking of, I am ready, at a word from you, sweetest, to aid in concealing from the savage vengeance of the Government any misguided gentleman who may be implicated with poor Layard—even if it were your lover, Evelyn," I added proudly.

"It is not my lover; it is—Oh, Harry, stoop down your head while I whisper. It is the King."

"The King!"

"Hush!—not so loud! His Majesty is in London. He was here within this month, and went on to town with my brother Arthur and another."

"Here—in this house?"

"Here—my father's guest. He landed at Dartmouth, and lay hidden here till the time came to go on to London, to be ready for a rising that was to have begun by our friends seizing the Tower. Alas! that will never be now—Counsellor Layard's arrest has discovered all. My father had a letter by a sure hand from Arthur two days ago. The Elector's Government have information that his Majesty is in London, and all the roads and the ships are closely watched. Poor Layard knows where his Majesty is hidden, but he is faithful—God give him strength to be faithful even to the death."

"My uncle does not treat me with such confidence as you do, Evelyn; he has told me nothing of all this."

"He does not know you as I do, dear cousin; and he does know that you are on the Elector's side."

"The Pret—the Chevalier de St. George—is to be got safely away from England—that is the adventure, then?"

"Once he is safe with us here, my father will do the rest. There is a vessel ready at Dartmouth. But Arthur writes that he and all suspected Jacobites are so closely watched that for a week at least he had not dared to go near the King."

"I will go to London, Evelyn."

"Oh, Henry! You will save the King?"

"Your king—no king of mine! And this is the adventure, fair cousin, for which a Rupert's reckless courage was needed, is it? I think a lawyer's cunning and readiness will be more to the point. Let us go to my uncle."

"He will be angry with me—very angry—when he hears that I have told you all."

And very angry the old Tantivy was. He scowled on Evelyn almost as blackly as on me—the light of his life though she was. "Nephew Harry," he said, "this little fool has blabbed out

to you what was neither her secret nor mine, but his Majesty's. I was a dolt to think that my own child, more than any other piece of Eve's flesh, might be trusted to be discreet. Fairy, thou hast failed grievously in thy duty both to thy King and to thy father."

Evelyn neither blushed nor wept, but looked straight at him with pale cheeks and eyes that seemed kindled from the light that was in his own.

"Father," she said, "I have neither failed in duty nor in discretion. Before I trusted my cousin, I had tried him."

"Thou, Fairy!—*thou* hadst tried him! How couldst try him, child? Thy girl's silliness could never match his lawyer's subtlety. I crave thy pardon, nephew Harry, but 'tis thy trade, thou knowest, to be subtle. Ha!" the old squire cried, with an angry stamp of his foot, "girl thou hast not—say thou hast not tempted him as no maiden of the line of Leigh would surely tempt a kinsman. Harry, didst thou go to her with a love-tale on thy lips?"

"I did."

"And she? Girl, didst thou tempt him through his love for thee to be a traitor? Thou mayst call it making a loyal subject of him; I say if he has listened to thee, he has become something baser far than a Whig—a perjured villain."

Fairy looked very bravely at me.

"Tell my father all that passed," she said.

I told him all. My uncle heard me out, and then wrung my hand and swore an oath or two that I was an honest fellow; then very heartily kissed his daughter, and begged her pardon. Next he took me into his confidence, and told me all the history of the presence in England of him whom he called the King, and I the Chevalier; and we held that day a family council of three.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHEVALIER.

I LEFT for London next morning on a good nag, with a letter for my cousin Arthur in my keeping. It had cost my honoured uncle some time and pains to indite; and while his unaccustomed hand was labouring with the pen, I had seized the opportunity to press my suit on Mistress Fairy. Neither Yes nor No would she give me, but only said, and very truly, that the former would sound too much like the bargain her father had accused her of making with me. So, being neither able to win her to declare that she loved or hated me, I closed my pleading with a kiss—perhaps with more than one—and she, as soon as free of my arms, did very heartily box my ears therefor; and next morning, as I have said, I rode away as love-lorn a knight-errant as any in old romance. A knight-errant say I? Nay, rather like an arrant fool. But she—oh, she was the most bewitching excuse for man's folly that English sun ever shone on!—and my father Adam was made such another fool before me.

I carried my letter safely to London, in spite of bad roads and highwaymen—pitiful cowards most of the latter, as well as knaves—and duly

delivered it to Arthur Leigh. Now, my good cousin Arthur hated me from of old almost as well as I loved his sister; and, for my part, I could never listen to ten words from him but my fist would clench with the impulse to knock him down. So that our meeting was not as that of brothers.

He flung down the letter when he had read it, with an angry oath.

"Is my father mad? A Whig in our counsels—you! Look you, Mr. Henry Ingram, if I have but the faintest reason to suspect you of playing false, that moment will I run my rapier through you."

"I had best keep my hand on the hilt of mine when with you, Arthur; and then I can draw when you do, and be in no danger."

"We will try that behind Montague House tomorrow, if thou hast mettle to meet me there."

"Dear cousin, all the metal that I have I carry by my side; and for the rest, I have brought here only honest thoughts towards you."

"My father says that you are still a Whig."

"Still and always."

"Yet you are willing to join with us Jacobites to convey the King in safety out of London! What motive, if not that of Judas Iscariot, have you for thus proffering to put your neck in danger?"

"Good Arthur, I am Job, not Judas, to bear so patiently with your foul language and fouler thoughts. For my motives, I am not accountable for them to you."

"I will not trust you without I know them."

I looked at him silently for a little while. "I have no wish that the Chevalier —"

"The King!"

"Let him be the King to you and the Chevalier to me. I have no wish to see him fall into the relentless hands of the Government; and, short of plotting treason, I am ready to do what a man may to aid in putting this unhappy and ill-advised Prince in safety."

"But Tyburn, man! Tyburn! 'Tis a question of thy neck's safety. Will you expose it to be stretched out of pure humanity and love of your fellow-man?"

"No, Leigh; it is out of my love for your sister that I do what I am doing."

Arthur Leigh started up. "I had rather have you at my sword's point than for either comrade or brother. But since it is so, I can trust you. You will be secret and trusty? Swear it."

"I give you my honour as a gentleman that I will be secret as the grave."

"In prison or out of it—whether we get the King safely away, or fall into the hands of the Philistines ourselves—you will be true to us, true as poor Kit Layard himself—on your honour?"

"On my honour!"

"Enough, I accept you as a comrade, Harry. Be here on Thursday after nightfall. We who are charged with the safety of his Majesty will have our plans laid by then, and you shall know what directions we have to give you."

Had he not been Fairy's brother, I could never have kept my temper with Arthur Leigh. There was an affectation of insolent superiority about the young swaggerer that made it hard to refuse his invitation to that famous theatre for the duello—the ground at the back of Montague

House—or to forget that while a Templar I had been no mean hand with the rapier. I say nothing of the foils; a man cannot tell what he is or is not till he tests himself with buttonless steel.

But I kept my temper and my appointment with this unfledged Rupert both. He did not swagger so much on this second interview, and seemed impressed with the grave character of the business that we had in hand. Two others of the most mounting spirits of the Jacobite party—alas! after this recent rising of '15 one of the pair has mounted the gibbet's height—were present with him. The plan we had to consider between us did not take long in discussing or in adopting. Briefly, it was that the Chevalier de St. George should quit London in my company disguised as a woman.

"God save the King!" drank all of the company when we parted but myself, whose toast was "God save the Chevalier!" And on the Monday following I was taken, after nightfall—skulking through lanes and by-ways with my guides—to a certain nobleman's house just outside London, where I bent the knee—in homage to his misfortunes, not his claims—before the elder Pretender.

A very effeminate and womanish-looking Prince I found him; perfectly smooth-faced, for all that he was now over thirty years old, and looking not above five or six and twenty. His very voice was a woman's; and I could well understand, now I had looked on him and listened to it, that he had preferred some years before the company of his French mistresses to heading the gallant rebels who fought for him at Sheriffmuir and Preston. The mystery was where he could have picked up courage enough to bring him to England now. But I bent my knee to him; for I pitied, if I despised him.

"You will not betray me—no!" the Chevalier said in his soft voice, and without any trace of foreign accent in it. "I may put my life in your hands—my friends assure me that I may. If it were my life only, that were nothing; but with me there are bound up the hopes of the House of Stuart."

"I will serve your Highness as faithfully as if I were your most devoted adherent."

"Perhaps you may be so yet—who knows, with such a sweet influence at work on you as has brought you here to-day? Ah, lovely Mistress Fairy!" the Chevalier said gaily; and I, who followed with my eyes the direction of his own, thought they met my cousin Arthur's, and that the two men exchanged a smile.

CHAPTER IV.

A WISER MAN.

Not to linger over a story that I have small pride or pleasure in telling, I need only say that the next morning, when I came down from a bad night's rest, I found the Chevalier dressed as a woman—and a thorough woman he looked, if that be any compliment to pay a prince. While the Prince was at breakfast by himself, and I with some of his party, scouts were sent out to

make certain that the house was not watched, and their report being assuring, my fair companion mounted and rode off about mid-day. We passed through London, and by nightfall were fairly out on the western road, and all seemed to promise our unmolested arrival in Devon, or, at worst, that we might have to point our pistols at a highwayman.

But alas! this fair promise was as deceitful as a woman. We lay that night at a poor inn—the Prince in a separate chamber, as beffited his apparent sex and his real dignity, and started again early the next morning. I had little fear of our being either stopped or followed, for the few people who knew me in London or out of it knew me for the son of a staunch Whig and a loyal adherent myself of the House of Hanover. My mother's family, as my story will have made plain, were indeed bitter Jacobites; but my father had brought her over to his way of thinking, much to the disgust of her brother in Devon. But I should be all this time with the Chevalier on the western road, and not prating of our family politics. Well, on this second day of our journey, little as I had feared it, we were pursued, and that by a troop of horse.

They came into sight round a turn of the road, as we were halting to let our nags drink, and hollered to us to surrender. We galloped off instantly, and a shot or two followed, but hastily and wildly aimed, and so harmless both to ourselves and the staunch animals that carried us. So we rode off, and a volley of shouts and oaths came after the bullets to us down the wind, and were as harmless to us as they.

All that long afternoon we rode on hard—now well ahead, now closely pressed. Towards evening, some of our pursuers must have got fresh horses in a village we passed through, for they came on furiously, while our tired steeds flagged. We prayed for darkness, that we might evade them. Alas! while it was scarcely twilight they were on our heels, and more shots were fired, and my companion's horse staggered and then pitched neck and crop over, as dead as Queen Anne. The Chevalier had but just time to avoid being crushed under it.

"I sprang down and held my stirrup for the Prince to mount. "Quick! quick!" I said. "Up!"

"But you?" he answered, with no unprincely manner.

There was no time for more—the dragoons were on us. We drew our swords—our pistols were in our holsters—and stood back to back. A huge fellow charged at me, and I parried the cut he aimed at me and ran him through the arm. But in the same instant I was knocked over by his horse, and very speedily the Prince and I were bound and prisoners.

They gave him my horse, and left me to walk; and in this plight we retraced our road till we fell in with the officer commanding the troop. We learned by questions he put to us that the Government had received information of the Chevalier being about to leave London disguised as a woman. Captain Hughes was as good-humoured over the result of his day's work as the promotion he looked for might well make him; and ordered me a horse, and with apologies for the roughness of his men, caused the Prince's hands and mine to be un-

bound; and so, with much politeness but a vigilant eye, escorted his prisoners back to London. But my companion was not doomed to see the inside of the Tower.

She called the captain to her the morning we were leaving the inn at Hounslow, where we had been sheltered on the second night of our doleful progress.

"Captain," she said, "for whom do you take me?"

"Sir," said the captain, "I take you to be that person for whose apprehension the Government offer a reward, under the name of the Chevalier de St. George, and who pretends to the throne of these realms."

"Sir, I am a woman."

I was astounded, and the gallant captain incredulous. But the Chevalier persisted in his declaration; and on the landlord's wife and some gossips of her acquaintance being empanelled as a jury of matrons, their verdict confirmed it. So that the lately-exulting Captain Hughes rode on to London in furious ill-humour; and instead of being honoured with an apartment in the Tower the counterfeit Pretender was flung with me into Newgate.

When we were both carried before a magistrate for examination, I learned that madam was the wife of a Jacobite gentleman who had thought her safety—as, indeed, the brave creature herself did—of much less account than the Chevalier's.

So my good cousin Arthur and this very patriotic husband had e'en arranged between them the excellent little plot in which I played fool to this couple of knaves. When Mrs. Lascelles had ridden off under my escort, information was that night conveyed to the Government by a pretended traitor to his party that the Pretender in a woman's dress, was being smuggled out of London and down into the west. The government ordered off a troop of horse in hot pursuit; and while suspicion was thus diverted to a pretended Pretender and my unlucky self, the real hope of the Jacobite faction was got safely out of the country and over to France. 'Twas a comedy with a stroke of genius in it, and cleverly played; but I think its prime contriver, my dear cousin Arthur Leigh, was disatisfied that it did not turn to tragedy, so far as I, Harry Ingram, was concerned. I feel sure he had laid his account that I would not get off with life both from pursuing troopers and an outwitted Government.

I was tried without my fair companion appearing at the bar beside me; for Mrs. Lascelles had been enlarged, after a few weeks' imprisonment and much bullying from the crown lawyers, and many attempts to entrap or frighten her into telling what she knew of the secrets of the Jacobite party. But the lady proved to be that most admirable of created beings, a woman who can keep a secret; and when sure of this they let her go. But I was tried—being doomed to be a victim all through, and likely now to feel what the strong arm of the law could do for the sovereign *de facto*, after having already suffered from the knavish tricks played on behalf of him that Evelyn vowed was King *de jure*. Luckily for me, the Crown could not prove to the satisfaction of the whole twelve of the jury that tried me that I had supposed my companion to be the Pretender, or had, indeed been anything more than the

innocent victim of a knavish Jacobite intrigue although my flight and attempted resistance when overtaken were pieces of evidence against me that it stretched my counsel's plausibility to the utmost—and he had a store of it—to explain away.

Flight and fight notwithstanding, the jury disagreed, and I was sent back to Newgate, to lie there till I could be tried again. But my father made strong interest for me; and his Majesty's advisers were not very eager to keep an affair before the public that furnished much food for laughter to the Tory wits; and might reasonably doubt besides of my conviction after the result of the former trial. So that the representations made on my behalf were presently listened to; and the King, in his clemency, gave gracious consent that the prosecution should be dropped.

Then went I back into the world a wiser man—and certainly a sadder; for it was to learn that, during the months I had been cooped up, my cousin Evelyn had been asked in marriage by a certain jolly Devon squire, and had answered him with the yes I could not win from her. And at first I wished myself as dead as poor Kit Layard—hanged and quartered months before—but presently listened to my good father's counsel; and, going on the continent, travelled for a year. I came back of the faith of the Romish Church in one thing—that marriage between first cousins ought not to be; and, after looking about me for a while, fell presently to wooing a maiden as unlike as might be to Evelyn Leigh, and in the end happily won her to be my wife. And with her I have peacefully lived until this old age in which I write.

POSTAGE STAMPS.

NOT the least remarkable of modern fancies is that of Postage-stamp collecting, which, after a struggle of thirty years or so, has finally succeeded in establishing itself among the art studies of our time, and may fairly lay claim to public attention.

In this article I propose to sketch slightly the history of this last of modern art fashions, and to tell a little of what is going on in this now firmly-established branch of art commerce; for although it is pretty generally known that the mania for postage-stamp collecting is no longer confined to the school-boy as in its early days, but has become of late years, a study, and, in many instances, a passion with grave, serious people, still it is, perhaps, not so widely known how important and universal has become the business of postage-stamp collecting, or how extensive and widespread are its ramifications, or what sums of money are yearly expended in Europe and America in this most recent of modern crazes.

It must seem strange, no doubt, to many wise and sober-minded people, that so apparently trumpery an affair, and so eccentric a mania as this, should have succeeded in reaching unto such a remarkable position, and should engage the attention of tens of thousands of persons in all civilized countries; nevertheless, such is the fact, and there are in Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, and elsewhere, as also in England,

merchants and dealers in postage stamps for collecting purposes, many of whom find in this somewhat odd kind of commerce, not only a paying occupation, but one giving often monetary results and profits of no mean order.

On the 10th of January, 1840, the first postage stamps were issued by the English Post Office authorities; they were of one penny and two-pence. Just preceding this event, the number of letters which passed through the English Post Office amounted to about seventy-five millions per annum. According to the Postmaster-General's report for 1884, the estimated number was 1,322 millions; figures could hardly tell a more eloquent tale than do these! and when it is remembered that these 1,322 millions of letters, as also 153 millions of post-cards, 294 millions of book-packets, and 142 millions of newspapers, some 1,900 millions in all, require the use of even a greater number of postage stamps to frank them, one is lost in wonder at the immensity of work accomplished by the tiny postage stamps with which we are all so familiar, and of which we think about so little, unless engaged in the occupation of collecting them.

In England and France alone the two countries so linked together by ties of commerce, the sale of stamps by the Post Office authorities may be safely calculated as exceeding 4,000 millions annually, sufficient, if placed side by side, to extend more than 50,000 miles or more than twice the circumference of our globe. If such be the result as concerning the postal importance of two only of the leading nations, what then must be the world's consumption of the modest little postage-stamp?

The first countries to follow in the wake of England, and adopt the postage stamp as a system, were America, France, and Belgium, in 1847 to 1849; Germany, and other European countries followed soon after, so that, in the year of the first great exhibition in London, in 1851, Rowland Hill's immortal institution had been adopted by nearly all the leading powers. Gradually one by one other countries followed suit: Portugal, Sweden, and Norway in 1853-55; Russia and Mexico in 1856-7; Turkey, the last European power to join, in 1862; and of later years, Persia and Egypt, in 1865-6; Japan and Afghanistan in 1873, and even the Chinese Government in 1878.

It should be noted, however, that the British Colonies were all early in the field, and some of their first postage stamps are at the present day among the choicest and rarest in the collector's album: Canada, New South Wales, Mauritius, and the Cape Colony, dating back to 1847-53.

At the present time there is not a single established government or power, however small or insignificant, outside the postal circle.

The idea of collecting used postage stamps first came into vogue about thirty years ago; for some time it was looked upon as a harmless and innocent amusement for children, and not without a certain utility as tending to lead to the study of geography, but was considered quite unworthy the attention of serious minds. Gradually, however, as variety gave some little interest to the postage stamp, and as one country after another adopted it, the idea of collecting began to spread, the fashion, which commenced in England, extended abroad,

and thus in time it began to assume certain proportions, and after a while was fairly afloat. Prejudice was long against success, and ridicule was often brought to bear against what the majority of people termed "the folly of the craze"; nevertheless, it made steady progress as an art amusement, and of late years, so general has become the fashion for collecting postage stamps, that not only is it now all but universal, but well filled albums are to be found side by side with other art treasures in many of the choicest collections in Europe; and there are collections of stamps just as in the same way there are collections of pictures, engravings, old china, or any other object or work of art. And after all there is much to be said for and but little against this hobby, for postage stamps are full of variety, many are real art productions, exceedingly pretty and artistic, and while some are, no doubt, rough in design and work, the majority are simply exquisite in taste and finish, and often full of the most perfect arrangement of colour; and it is not surprising that he who has made the postage stamp his study, and whose collection, by dint of perseverance and expenditure, has become important, will pass hours over his well filled album with as much delight as the collector of fine prints over his beloved portfolio, for the one is, in every sense, as much an art collection as the other.

The business of dealing in postage stamps first came seriously into existence about twenty or five and twenty years ago, and although in its infancy it was of a slight nature and a difficult and up-hill commerce to establish, it has, nevertheless, since become so extensive and widespread, that at the present day there are many merchants or dealers in London, Paris, and the other great capitals of Europe, who confine themselves to the one specialty of supplying the wants of collectors, and who are engaged in a large and lucrative trade. The establishments of leading firms in this somewhat remarkable branch of commerce are little, if at all, inferior in aspect and management to those of merchants; there are as much regulation and system, telegraphing, and correspondence, as in an ordinary merchant's office; and numerous clerks and assistants are engaged in the apparently simple occupation of dealing in used postage stamps. It is quite certain that without the aid of such dealers the serious album collector would find it extremely difficult—indeed all but impossible—to progress satisfactorily, so far from easy is it now to obtain rare and authentic specimens, and so extremely fanciful is their market value, depending as it often does so materially upon whether the stamp be new or to what extent obliterated.

Let not the ambitious beginner fancy that it is a simple and easy thing to get together an important collection of postage stamps; he will soon find out his mistake; there is much to be done, much experience to be gained, before he can become skilled as a collector, and, like most other art hobbies, it is an expensive one. The first 1,500 or 2,000 stamps which may be obtained by any one without difficulty or much outlay are all well enough, but it is when beginning to search after stamps which are a little rare that the assistance of the dealer is found not only useful but positively necessary, and then comes the outlay; the purse has to be dipped into a little more freely,

the collector becomes fairly launched, and his work may be said to be really commencing; nevertheless, let him not be discouraged, there are facilities and guides in abundance, catalogues with marked prices to help him as to values; and with a good album—for expense should not be spared in this first outlay—he will find the path swept clear before him, and requiring but his own care, time, and attention to enable him gradually to form his collection.

Dealing in postage stamps is carried on on the continent to a prodigious extent; the packets which are prepared and offered for sale, containing ten, fifty, one hundred, or more, and which meet our eye in the shop windows of every important town, are familiar to everybody; these are supplied by the chief dealers, among whom there is great competition, and from whom any quantity may be obtained, even to the extent of a million in one lump, these, of course, consisting of stamps in too obliterated a condition to figure in collections or meet with individual sale.

The most remarkable feature in the postage stamp business is the irregularity in value, and the collector, before he gains much experience, finds himself mystified by this, to him, inexplicable difference; that, after all, however, is easy of explanation, being simply a question of scarcity and plenty, for it is self-evident that among European nations where the issue of stamps is upon such a continuously vast scale there can be but little difficulty in obtaining specimens, except of dates far back, and not always even then; while with countries such as the smaller colonies, where correspondence is upon a comparatively limited scale, and where changes in the price of postage have necessitated corresponding changes in the stamps themselves, the supply is infinitely smaller from which to obtain specimens. Stamps which are in abundance may be obtained in good condition from one half-peuny, and even less, to a few pence each, and these comprise a very large proportion necessary for an album; but in the case of rare stamps, or stamps difficult to obtain, their value ranges from shillings to pounds, indeed, many a stamp can only be obtained in exchange for sovereigns or bank-notes.

The following few examples, taken from many, will give some idea of the almost fabulous prices ruling in the present day for rare stamps.

New Grenada or Columbia: the stamps of which, dating from 1859 to 1870, are considered choice; several are worth from 20s. to 100s. each.

The stamps of Mexico, of issue 1867, termed the "Guadalaxara," are as precious as good engravings; a few of this series are current at from £2 to £10 each.

Of English Guiana, the round, rough, typographic stamps of 1850, would find ready sale at £10 each.

Of the stamps of Spain there are many rare and costly, that of two reales of 1851 is worth £10; the same of 1852, hardly less.

But there are stamps of even higher value, such as one penny and two pence of first issue of Mauritius, which are quoted as being worth anywhere between £20 and £40 each, although it is only fair to say they are like pictures by Raphael or Titian, and are to be found only in a few choice private collections; certain it is, however, that these and a few other similarly rare and precious

specimens would, if appearing in the market, not only cause a flutter, but be sought after eagerly.

As for stamps of the value of from 5s. to 20s. each, they are in large number.

Among such, many of the stamps of Afghanistan, if new—the 18 Kreutzer envelope stamp of Baden, 1858, is worth from 12s. to 15s. The steamboat stamps of Buenos Ayres, of 1858, even if obliterated and in poor condition, are worth 20s. or more. The 10 pesos, black upon red, of 1867, New Grenada, is worth 15s. to 20s. be it even in bad condition, while, if good, is worth £5 and so on. These are but a few examples out of many.

With postage stamps, however, as indeed with pretty well everything else in commerce, there are base imitations, and it behoves the collector to be constantly on his guard that he be not deceived, for the quantity of false stamps is enormous, and meets one at every step. The practised eye can easily detect, almost at a glance, but not so the unskilled collector; and it is chiefly among stamps just a little above the common, and those which are somewhat rare, that the imitation steps in; as a matter of course all these false stamps are obliterated, thus preventing post office interference. Still, with all the care possible, these imitations often find their way into good collections, while the ordinary albums are hardly ever without some specimens.

The number of Governments which have adopted the postage stamps for letters amounts to 212. The greatest variety is to be found among the stamps of the United States, of which there are 325 distinct sorts; next in order comes Spain, with 235, and so in a gradually descending scale until we arrive at China, whose Government rests content with three specimens only.

In all, there are about 6,800 different stamps in existence, dating from the establishment of the institution in 1840, and it is not too much to say that fully one-half of this quantity can only be obtained by the outlay of a considerable sum of money. The best proof that such is the case exists in the fact that there are many albums in private hands, still incomplete, which have cost between £500 and £1,000 each, while some, such as those in the possession of certain members of the Rothschild family and other wealthy art collectors, represent in value from £2,000 to £3,000 and even more. Some collectors, not content with a single specimen of each stamp, possess repetitions of the same, and thus amass tens of thousands of rare and current stamps in the finest condition, representing a small fortune; for many of the examples thus treasured up are equal in value to some of Rembrandt's or Van Leyden's finest etchings. Notwithstanding the majority of amateurs in postage stamps confine themselves to album collections, there are many who devote their attention to decorating screens and even apartments, and in many instances with most pleasing and even bizarre results, and in this way many millions of postage stamps are utilized at the cost of labour and patience quite amazing; and although it may be a question whether time thus occupied is not very much wasted, yet there is no doubt that odd and spare moments which arrive to most of us, and which we often know not how to employ, may be spent less profitably than in ornamenting some stray corner or other

of a wall or an apartment with useless postage stamps, which, if arranged with taste, may be rendered both pleasing and artistic.

And now, reader, if in any hidden drawer or sacred spot, you have treasured up old letters, too precious to be burned owing to the memories they recall, look them up, and see if you possess among the stamps which they may bear any which form the pearls of a collection: in such case you will not have regretted the perusal of this paper.

J. W. ANDERSON.

THE
MYSTERY OF SIR OLIVER VALAYNES.

BY MRS. GREGG.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUNERAL OF LADY VALAYNES.

EARLY on the morning of the funeral the clerk of the church came to Mr. Valaynes for the key of the chapel gates, and he at once opened a cabinet in what had been Sir Oliver's private room, believing that to be the place where his father always kept this key; but, after searching the cabinet and not finding it, he came to the conclusion that it must be in some secret drawer which he could not then discover.

"You must force the lock," he said; "that is all that can be done, and," as the clerk was going away, "there will be no difficulty in raising the slabs if you find the right ones."

The clerk said he knew that, and that between him and Jakes they'd surely hit the right stone to lift; "there's something there, sir, that'll may be have to be moved," he added.

Mr. Valaynes thought a minute and then said, "Oh I know—it can be placed elsewhere for the present, and then see that it is restored to the same position."

They alluded to the coffin, which had, under Sir Oliver's own inspection, been laid beside the Crusader's tomb.

The person spoken of as Jakes was Jakes Berry, the old sexton of the parish, who, now soventy years of age, had been born and had lived all his life within a few minnutes' walk of the church, and was one of a family who in the stationary times of the past, had held that humble office among them for generations. Andrews, the clerk of the church, was also a native of the place, and lived on the confines of the Park, being master of a school established by Sir Oliver for the children of his tenants. He was also often employed by the baronet in the evenings in doing writing and keeping books connected with the management of the extensive estate, which Sir Oliver kept very much in his own hands.

Before leaving the mansion Joseph Andrews obtained from the house steward such tools as would suit for breaking open a strong lock, and proceeded towards the church.

It was winter, Christmas was at hand, so near that there was some difficulty in arranging that the funeral should take place before Christmas

Day, but it was right that if possible this should be, as Lady Valaynes when very near her end had expressly desired, that if she died at any time near to Christmas Day she should be quickly buried, so that her demise should interfere as little as possible with other people's Christmas cheer, and she requested that the ordinary bounty given out at that time to the poor on the estate should be doubled.

Anxious to avoid anything that in the slightest way might be construed as disrespectful, Mr. and Miss Valaynes, who directed this matter, had almost determined to overlook this request for haste, and to defer the funeral until, or even beyond, the period then common on such occasions; but finally the other course was decided on, partly to gratify poor young Everard, who had been present when his mother made this request, and urged that it should not be set aside.

As Andrews, taking a short cut across the park, approached the church, he saw that Jakes was there before him, for above the lone grey tower and the leafless trees, a thin line of blue smoke rose up, and shewed that Jakes was busy with the stove and vestry fires.

"Here's a job," said Andrews, holding up the tools. "The chapel key can't be got; we'll have to break the lock."

"Alack, Alack, an' where's the key?" said Jakes, holding up his hands.

"I can't say; but come on, man, we'll have to break the lock, and get the flag-stones lifted up," for Jakes had subsided again to his kneeling position in front of a stove that he was cramming with more billets than it could hold.

"I'm nae picklock, master Andrews; jeat go at it yersel'. I se nae use for work like that," and Andrews went on up the aisle, saying to himself that "Jakes had grown a crabb'd old tyke, and if he could not manage the lock himself he'd have to go for some other help."

Andrews was, however, accustomed to jobbing about his own place, and the use of tools came handily to him. The bolt was suited to the ponderous gates, but it was a spring bolt, going in part of the way if the gate was thrown or pulled to, and sent home to its full length only by the key. Locks such as this were common a hundred years ago, though it is hard to see in what their advantage consisted, as in either case a key was necessary to open them. Andrews, however, found an advantage in this one, for he had little difficulty in hooking back the bolt and opening the gate, and, astonished at the ease with which this was done, he ran a chisel down the keeper and found there was length there for a bolt twice as long as the one he had withdrawn.

The lock was also evidently in good order, not rusty for want of oil, but seeming to have been supplied with it not long before.

Jakes was still at his fire, cramming in billets of wood.

Andrews went quickly to him. "Come on, Jakes," he said, "and shew me about these slabs, Davie Duncan (a mason) will be here at nine o'clock to lift them."

"But the key?" said Jakes, looking up hurriedly, "the key?"

"Never you mind the key. I've got the gates open. Man, it wasn't locked at all; it's just been pulled from the outside," and he moved on, fol-

lowed by Jakes shambling along like one too weak to walk.

The old man seemed strange in some way, frightened-looking and colourless.

The men entered the chapel together, and stood a minute, as if awed.

Beside the Crusader's tomb lay the cedar coffin, the lid on, and upon it a plate inscribed with the name and date of birth of Sir Oliver Valaynes.

Who could glance at it and not think with a deep pity of the kindly-hearted brave old man, who thus made himself familiar with what others shrank from, that he might spare those he loved from any thought about it; and there lay what he had fashioned for his long sleep, and where was he?

Who could penetrate the mystery that surrounded the end of this fine old English gentleman, who "bore without reproach" the untarnished name that came to him, spent his life and fortune in the midst of his own people, and then vanished from among them as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

"We'll have to move the coffin," said Andrews, "it's on that side of the white tomb that the flags lift."

"It's naethin' o' the kind," replied Jakes hastily, "it's this side; but, bless ye're heart, ye can lift any ane o' them—I wud'na touch yon," looking over at the coffin.

"We'll see when Davie comes," said the other, "the cement between these flag-stones does not look as it had ever been broken."

"But it has been broke—it has been broke, I tell you. Who kens mair about Valaynes Church than me? I ken every stone in it since I can mind; father and son, we're sextons here this nigh twa hunder years. I tell ye here's the side to open at."

Before Andrews could answer, feet were heard on the church pavement, and David Duncan came up beside them. "We'll soon see," said he, going down on his knees and examining the cement between the large stone slabs on the unoccupied side of the Crusader's tomb, "I would say these stones have not been budged since they were set; let's try the other side."

But here Jakes Berry got between them and the cedar coffin, and declared that while he was sexton, and had care of Valaynes Church, no man should meddle or move that coffin, that Sir Oliver brought in there himself, and told him, Jakes, "no man was to move it till he needed it himself," and going between them and the object of dispute, he frantically waved them off, while his eyes started, and great drops ran down his face from agitation.

The two men looked at him in amazement, and Duncan, who was a powerful fellow, quietly lifted him and set him outside the chapel gates; then, stepping quickly back, he called to Andrews to give him a hand, and advanced to lift one end of the cedar coffin.

They could not move it, the weight was too great.

Duncan said, "Is there a lead one inside?"

"Aye, there's lead in it! there's lead in it!" cried Berry, who had returned, but made no further attempt at molestation.

"There's nothing of the kind!" said Andrews, "it must be opened, there's something inside."

With that old Jakes fell across their feet in a dead faint.

"The old fool!" cried Duncan; "what's wrong with him?"

But they had to carry him to the air and get him revived, and then they left him to the care of his daughter, who was polishing up some brass tablets in the porch.

Duncan was for opening the coffin. Andrews thought they should acquaint Mr. Valaynes with its extraordinary weight, and ask if he would desire it should be examined; and Duncan said he would remain while Andrews went quickly to the mansion, but advised him to send over some men to lift the coffin away from its present position, for he was certain the opening to the vault was directly below it. This Andrews was not long in doing; and Duncan, with three others, found it as much as they could do to raise and carry to the side of the chapel the ponderous coffin, the size of which, great as it was, failed altogether to account for its weight, unless indeed there were a leaden structure inside, which no one had ever heard of.

One thing was plainly seen. The slabs below it were those that should be moved, and had been before.

The last time this was done was when Sir Oliver's father died many years before.

When Andrews reached the mansion the wide sweep in front was fast filling with equipages, which kept arriving by all the various roads through the park.

The saloons that had been thrown open were crowded with those who had been invited to attend, and on the lawn the tenantry as they arrived were ranging themselves in a long file to follow.

Mr. Valaynes did not pay much attention to what Andrews said about the strange weight of the coffin, the very mention of which was altogether abhorrent to him, as he had greatly disliked, and in his heart condemned, his father's proceedings regarding it, and finding men had been sent to remove it out of the way, told Andrews that would do for the present.

The funeral procession was so vast, there was difficulty in marshalling it so as to avoid confusion, and Mr. Andrews being required to head the school children, who were to bring up the rear, was unable then to return to the chapel, and therefore sent a message to Duncan, from whom, before the last part of the long train had started, he got an answer that the correct flags for lifting had been found, and the vault was open.

At last the procession was formed, and the immense *cortege* wound slowly through the park to the chapel, situated on its confines.

The leafless trees were touched over with lightly frozen snow, and every little branch and twig glittered and shone as from the parting clouds the sun came out and silvered them.

By the route taken it was a good hour's walk to reach the church, which when filled to the utmost held but a part of those present.

Probably with every one there thought turned far more persistently to the burial that had not been, than to that they were engaged at; for Lady Valaynes, secluded by long illness, was but little known among them; while to more than one generation for miles round Sir Oliver's had been a

most familiar name, and his appearance one of the best known that came their way.

A few only of the most familiar friends accompanied Mr. Valaynes and Everard into the chapel, and stood with them while the coffin was lowered, and so little had Mr. Valaynes been impressed by Andrews's hurried communication, that he was turning to leave the chapel when some whispered words from Colonel Bohun stopped him.

During a detention that arose at the church door before entering, David Duncan who, with other men, was waiting until they were called forward to assist, found himself behind Colonel Bohun, for whom he often worked, and to whom he had no hesitation in speaking. Colonel Bohun whispered to Mr. Valaynes that which the mason said to him, and Mr. Valaynes at once, without any hesitation, desired that the cedar coffin should be opened. He did not know what a foul aspersio[n] he was casting from himself in doing so, and with his brother, the colonel and others, stood while the screws were taken out and the lid lifted.

A scarcely suppressed cry rose from all of them. There lay Sir Oliver!—recognizable at last, though six months had done their work upon the well-known form. There he lay, in the riding suit he wore when on that glowing June day he mounted his horse at the door of Bohun House and rode away—away from the ken of neighbour and of friend, never to darken his own door again!

He seemed to have been laid in with deliberation, for the tails of his riding coat, long and square as was the fashion of the time, were smoothed under him, and his riding whip lay by his side.

From man to man the rumour went through the still crowded church, and the throng outside, which had scarcely yet begun to disperse, crushed up to the chapel door to know if it were true; whilst those within had scarcely yet found breath to whisper to each other of what they saw—that he had been murdered! for his cambric neckcloth and lace ruffled shirt, and long white powdered hair, tied in a cue behind, had all been steeped in blood, and it had flowed down and lay dry but unmistakable on the floor of the cedar coffin!

When the first agitation of the discovery had subsided, a close examination was made. His diamond neck pin, ring, and watch were there. The watch had stopped at twelve o'clock on the night when he was missed, from which it seemed that his death, however brought about, occurred between that hour and twelve at noon, when he left Colonel Bohun's. He had not been robbed; there were a number of guineas in one waistcoat pocket, silver in the other. From one broad coat-tail came two bulky parchments, with the signatures subscribed at Bohun House, and in the second was the key of the vault, confirming Andrew's idea that it had been closed from the outside.

The mystery seemed now greater than ever.

Distressed and perplexed even beyond what they had been before, the family renewed their exertions to discover the murderers, as it now seemed, of their father, and offered £500 for the slightest clue to his death.

The extraordinary manner in which his remains were hid away, and the fact the key of the vault had been taken from his private cabinet, seemed to some to point to domestic treachery; and alto-

gether the affair looked worse to the public, discerning as this numerous body is called, and was infinitely more painful to the family.

At the same time, though the theory of murder was adopted, the medical men employed to examine the remains could find no wound, nor even any appearance of blows having been inflicted, though six months having passed, it was difficult to assert this positively.

The deeds found proved Sir Oliver to have acted in a spirit of perfect justice, placing his eldest son in the position he had himself held so long, and providing handsomely for Everard and his daughter, between whom, the jointure settled on Lady Valaynes was to be divided after her death.

No need here, then, for the old man's death. His family could have asked no fairer division.

Jakes Berry had been ill ever since the day Lady Valaynes was buried. His family said that for some time before he had been greatly changed, and that day finished him. He had never been the same since he swooned when the coffin Sir Oliver left in his care not to be meddled with till he needed it, was not only moved, but opened, with such astonishing results.

His livid and puckered visage attracted notice from more than one, as he squeezed his lean form among the crowd that surged about the chapel door when the amazing news went out that Sir Oliver was found, and he twisted in and out among them until he got a look at what the coffin held, and then he went home and took to his bed and did not rise again. He seemed to have a low fever, and, by his wife's account, he "raved on and muttered on until she was feared to be alone with him at night."

At length, after some weeks, Jakes, who in the meantime had been supplied by the Valaynes' housekeeper with everything that could be used by him, Jakes Berry drew near his end.

Mr. Hunt, the rector, was often with him, and one day, after being a long time beside his bed, Mr. Hunt went hurriedly to look for Mr. Valaynes, or rather, Sir Oliver Valaynes, as he was now called, though this he would never allow himself to be named until the mystery was cleared away regarding his father's end, and this gentleman, after seeing Mr. Hunt, mounted his horse and rode away to Bohun House, and before the day had darkened he and the colonel, with Mr. Hunt, were seen approaching Jakes's cottage. Joseph Andrews, the clerk, had also been sent for, and was there before them.

Mr. Hunt first went in alone to where Jakes, propped up in bed, certainly looked as if he had nearly done with earthly trouble. Mr. Hunt spoke soothingly to him, and said he had brought the gentlemen now—would he be able to speak to them?

Jakes assented, and Mr. Hunt brought them quietly in, and also desired Jakes's son and daughter to come and hear what their father had to say. His old wife was with him, steadying his hand as he drank the wine she gave him.

"I meant no harm—I meant no harm!" cried Jakes, as his eye rested on the new baronet. "I loved the old master, I did—nobody better," and he grew so agitated that Mr. Hunt feared their object in coming there would be defeated. He took the old man's hand and said that the only

way to atone for the past was to own it all now, and not take away with him a secret no other could divulge, and he was desired to tell him that all the family would forgive him freely if he would only confess the whole truth, and on this Sir Oliver, who could scarcely steady his voice, came forward and confirmed all Mr. Hunt had said.

The subject of Jakes Berry's confession, translated from his vernacular into plain English, was that—"Being in the church on Friday, the 20th day of June last, I was brushing the cushions in the pews and turning them up for Sunday, a work I always did on a Saturday, but that Saturday I was going over to Ixlip market, a small business of my own, and neighbour Watson was to give me a lift in his cart, and that's the way I was cleaning the church of a Friday, and I went outside to shake the foot-mats of the porch, and up rides Sir Oliver and gives me 'Good day!' as cheery as man could do, and he got off the horse and tied him to the rails at the gate, and in he comes to the church.

"'I'm going in to the chapel, Jakes,' says he, 'and I have the key with me,' and out he pulls it.

"'It's nice and cool in here,' says he, and he took off his hat, and wiped his head and face—aye, and his neck too—with his silk pocket-handkerchief, for he was very warm.

"'Ye're hot, Sir Oliver,' says I.

"'I promised to be home at two o'clock, and I've ridden hard to get time for something I want here ;' and by this we were at the chapel gates, and he opened them and went in, and me after him.

"'I want to try the measure of this,' says he, and he touched the big coffin with his riding-whip. 'I think I'm getting a heap stouter, and I would have this altered if I thought I was getting too big for it. Lift the lid.'

"I did as I was bid, and he got in and laid himself down.

"'It'll do yet,' says he.

"I wasn't a bit scared at him, for I'd known him do the like afore, and it was himself kept the gate lock oiled that he might get into the chapel any time, and no trouble with the big bolt.

"'I'm not so much bigger as I thought,' says he, still lying there; and in the same breath, 'Run, Jakes ; that horse is off. Catch him ;' for sure enough he heard his feet on the ground outside.

"Out I went, and made after the horse, and when he heard me after him he gave his heels a kick and went the harder, and with that his front feet caught in the reins, and he kicked and flung, and made off through the church-yard, and jumped the wall where it's low at the far side, and made off past the wood. I could not do much following him, but as far as I could any way run I kept him in sight, thinking I'd see some one as could catch him; but not one living soul did I see, and I lost sight of him somewhere down at the Spinney. Thinks I, I'd better go back and tell Sir Oliver, for I did not know what to do, and I went back into the church, and up to the chapel, for I didn't meet him, and I felt sure I would, coming to see what was become of me and the horse.

"'He's not there yet surely,' thinks I, and I went into the chapel,

"It's the solemn truth that there he was lying in the coffin, and his arms down by his sides, as I seen him lying there; but, oh gentlemen! I'm telling you the solemn truth as a man who is just going before his Maker—the coffin had a heap of blood in it, and his whole face and neck was covered with it, and his eyes were shut, and he was not breathing. I nearly died at the sight, and I've never had an hour's health since. I never felt an old man until then. I thought he was murdered, and I just thought I would be murdered too, for them that did it could not be far off; and then I think my senses left me—I don't know for how long—but when I came to myself I was on the ground, and, foolish like, I got up and looked about me. There was no one in the chapel or the church, and no sign of any one having been there; and then the next thing came to me was, I was there alone, and Sir Oliver murdered, and what but I would be took for the murderer. Forgive me, gentlemen, but I was off my mind entirely, and I was going to go home and leave him as he was, and then it come to me it was safer to cover all up and let who would find it out, and I put on the lid and put in the screws, and screwed up the coffin, and left it; and when I didn't tell it at first, I could not tell it when the cry rose through the country about him, but it's took my life—it's took my life. I never had a quiet sleep since, and my food still seemed to choke me; and for the horse, gentlemen, it's my belief the gypsies got him. They were strong about Burnt Wood at the time, and they could soon colour him, and take the hair off him, and maybe lame him, so that no one would know him. But whoever murdered the master, it wasn't me. I never laid a hand on him till I tried to see if he was getting cold, and he was."

Perhaps, of all the feelings that swelled in the breasts of the listeners as this relation went on, the strongest was thankfulness that at last the mystery had come to light, and all other undefined suspicions and fears were laid at rest.

Colonel Bohun was the first to speak.

"Sir Oliver was not murdered," said he. "The rapid ride that very hot day, and he while so over-heated—a man of his build—lying down in that cold vault-like chapel—it's quite clear he died of apoplexy, or effusion of blood on the brain."

It was even so. Several medical men who were consulted about it gave it as their opinion, and the experience of others who had known of a seizure such as this being produced under certain circumstances by a sudden and violent change of temperature, confirmed their opinion, and satisfied the Valaynes' family that Sir Oliver had died literally from natural causes, though probably accelerated by his own very peculiar proceedings.

THE END.

LET old regrets for ever sleep,
Bright days have dawned at last;
Hopes unfulfilled no more we weep,
Let old regrets for ever sleep:
Let bygone ills be buried deep,
Their bitterness is past;
Let old regrets for ever sleep
Bright days have dawned at last!

F. E. BRADLEY.

A HISTORY FROM THE WEST.

BY CHARLES KBRUGGE.

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THE Irish village of Lennis is, for the most part, a cluster of poor dwellings, inhabited by an impoverished people. But in the same province, that of Connaught, there are many equally bad and some worse. Lennis lies on that hilly ground between the Vullary inlet and the Joyce mountains. It is a desolate country, whose soil gives meagre produce; and an unaltering state of penury, with not unfrequently gaunt famine, seems to hover around it, and encompass the lives of the greater portion of the dwellers.

What would be a fair-sized estate in some lands of different condition was, at the time of this narrative, but a poor property situate near Lennis. The landlord of the estate, which bore the name of the village, was a humane and well-meaning man, but his rent-sheet was a kind of worm which was persistently eating away his happiness and making him an irritable instead of a jovial fellow—and he was really good at the core.

"Look here, Garrin," he said one day to the man who was his bailiff, and looked after the estate in a general way, "I am weary of this infernal annoyance. Life is not worth having at the price I am paying for it. It's lenient and considerate I've been to the people—making sacrifices so that I might help them, and not grasping nor clamouring for my dues as many an owner would have done, and does all over the 'country. An' yet the tenants, or some of them, bear ill-will to me."

"It's because yer honer evicted Tim Rooney that the bad feeling is against yer," said Mr. Garrin, slowly.

"Tim Rooney is a drunken blaggard: idle and thriftless. Is it he, or any other man for the matter o' that, that has to be allowed to occupy land without paying a rent to the owner. Tim Rooney was the first man evicted from the estate whilst I've had possession, an' it wouldn't have happened to him av' he'd shown any endeavour to pay the money. But when I spoke strongly to him, didn't he meet me with an insolent oath. I'm never hard on an industrious man that means straight, as you know well, Garrin, but I shan't starve to keep a guzzler in a whisky shop."

"That's right enough, sir, but there's a many that give Rooney their sympathy."

"An' I'm unpopular in consequence. Yes, I know that, by what I hear an' see; but the opinions of such are of no account, they haven't the reasoning of a pig. I'll not be so soft with them in the future!"

Michael Garrin listened attentively to every word, and seemed to gather some satisfaction from his master's determination, and when the landlord was done speaking, he said—

"As I came along I saw some of Tim Rooney's cattle on the farm."

"Confound his drunken impudence!"

"What'll I do? Turn the bastes off again?"

"By all means. Has any one applied for the farm?"

"Not a soul. I offered it to some that would be glad to take it if they durst."

"Of what are they afraid?"

"Having a few holes shot through 'em. The agitation is strong all through the country,"

"I know that; but why should it affect my farms? they are not rent-racked."

"The boys talk of doing widout landlords."

Mr. Dermott laughed rather uneasily. "Do without landlords! The fools are never free of a grievance. By the powers, I wish I could do without tenants. If nobody'll take this farm of Rooney's it will run waste. I've been too easy with 'em all intirely, an' they're going to take advantage of good nature. Give notice to the backward ones (and by the 'postles that's all of them!) that arrears must be paid within a fortnight. And I think that's all at present, Garrin. Turn Rooney's cattle off that farm at once; and by the way, I hear ye've been on the spree again; I hope ye're done with that; a man like you should show a better example."

Garrin was not abashed by this reproof, but returned an almost stern look. "Sir, it's the only comfort I have in life," he replied coldly, "and I need it." And with that, he walked out of the 'office' (as that particular room was called), out of the house, and away upon his business.

The landowner sat meditatively filling his pipe and gazing out of window, watching the round-shouldered, stooping form of the bailiff traversing the path towards the gates.

"Has that man some feeling, after all?" Mr. Dermott was thinking; "or is he really as cold and callous as his neighbours report him. He is zealous in his work—and selfish; beyond that I cannot read him."

After a little more of this kind of speculation, Mr. Dermott, whose habit it was to attend to the little ceremonies of life, made his way to luncheon, and was soon merrily chatting with his friends and guests, quite forgetful of slow-coming rents and disrespectful tenants. Dermott was in no way exclusive; he was friendly and neighbourly—it might almost be said—fraternal with his tenants; but among a better class, for instance, such as dine at the same table, there was no more popular man in the county. Yet geniality and a kind heart did not shield him from the discontented envy of a half-clad and badly-fed people. He was becoming unpopular, and, at that time, this was the position of every landlord for miles around.

On leaving the Hall, Michael Garrin went direct to the farm from which he had evicted Tim Rooney, and quickly drove off the old tenant's cattle, leaving them in the roadway. Then after walking down a path which led to a house built in a hollow, he was at home. It was a much better dwelling than those usual to Lennis, from which it was distant about half a mile, and it was guarded from dirt and dust and decorated tastefully by a housekeeper whose excellence was not easily surpassed. This was Mary Garrin, niece of the bailiff; a young girl whose beauty needed not the aid of fine raiment; a dark-skinned colleen, whose fine-shaped head was thickly covered by a mass of jet-black hair which clustered on the brow. The eyebrows, too, were thick, and dark, and broad, and the eyes beneath gleamed with a sparkle which has no parallel, save in other eyes as bright.

Michael Garrin met his niece stolidly, and sat down to dinner without a word. This behaviour had no especial meaning, it was the man's manner. He did not at any time appear to derive pleasure from conversation; indeed, it is hard to say what had the power to please him, unless it was the consumption of "spirits," an operation for which, by word and deed, he confessed a liking. But Michael did talk a little, when it suited his purpose, and especially when he desired that others should talk to him. To look at Garrin as he sat at the table when the meal was through, and the sunshine of a bright day poured through the window and softened everything but the hard angles and the cold eyes of the bailiff's face; to look at him even when that golden light was upon him, was to view an unsympathetic, unimpressionable countenance, one that was distasteful to the beholder, with perhaps one exception. Mary Garrin did not dislike her uncle or his looks, for she recognized in him her guardian and keeper, to whom she was indebted for the many years of food, shelter, and clothing that she had needed and received since the death of her parents. Her household work created a *per contra* account now, but Mary was not gifted with that shortness of memory which forgets favours past. She had scarcely ever observed in him any mark of affection for her, but never expecting it, she had never noticed the want. Whoever thought of seeing Michael Garrin show affection? The man's appearance would not permit such an anticipation.

However, as the half hours slipped away, and Michael, after backing his chair from the table, still sat, Mary became troubled by his presence. She was unusually restless, and moved her eyes frequently to the door and window, and secretly listened when any sound came from the outside. To sit indoors like this on an afternoon was not the habit of the bailiff. He had taken his pipe from its place on the sideboard—a thick clay pipe common to the island—and after exhausting it twice, he refilled again, much to the wonder and dismay of Mary.

In our self-consciousness it is quite usual for us to mistake our share in the "doings" around us; we often take credit for a greater attention than we receive. Mary Garrin firmly believed her uncle was staying at home that afternoon solely on her account. She was convinced that suspicion lurked beneath that stolid face, and fancied that he was even more inclined to be silent than ordinarily, and she guessed at the reason of his attitude.

At length the girl rose leisurely and walked to the door, but in an aimless manner, as though she had no particular errand whatever. Yet when she got out of the cottage and beyond the reach of her uncle's eye as he sat in the chair, she made great speed, with softly treading steps, up the path, and then through the stile, which led into the tree-fringed road. Then she went on for a few yards, until she could stand quite hidden by a mould from the sight of her home. From here she looked down the road, expectant.

Very soon indeed a young man appeared, walking towards her.

She motioned him to approach quickly, and when they met, he saw she was agitated.

"My uncle is at home, Robert," she said dismally. "I'm afraid he's suspecting you were

coming. I hurried out here unbeknown to tell you to keep away from the house."

"And why should I keep away? He must know sooner or later."

"But he takes such strong dislikes; and av he knows anything of it now, he'll be so stern and cruel that the home will be made miserable."

"And I don't want that to be," said the young man fondly. "But I'm not afraid of Michael Garrin, bailiff and hard-heart though he be. I've been blessed, thank God, with enough to pay my debts, so I've niver had his hand on me or mine."

"Yes, Robert; and my uncle knows that you've got the means to keep a wife. But he has a grudge against your father, and he has no liking for you either."

"Shure there's no love lost between us either way," said Robert with a laugh. "But it's few indeed that are ever afther saying a good word for Michael Garrin. An' if he wasn't your uncle, I'd say harder words than I do. But av we can't be having a chat now, may I come along to-night? Maybe ye'll be free then."

"Oh, it's a bother intirely. I don't know what to say. I do wish his opposition was not so strong; there seems no getting over it. Robert, I often wonder ye don't turn to some other young girl."

"All the beauties in Connaught—an' there's a many—couldn't take me from ye, Mary my darlin'! But they're not likely to try; I'm not such a great catch as all that. I've only to look in your eyes and the magnetic power is on me at onest. Perhaps that's why I stay so long when I visit yer."

"Then in future when its getting late or I am expecting uncle, I'll turn my back and look away, and that'll release ye."

"But you needn't, I like the captivity very well."

"Mary, come home!" said a stern voice, and the young people, turning, saw Michael Garrin's dark features rising above the mould, upon which the man soon stood like a towering giant.

"Come home! What are ye doing in the company of that rake?"

Robert Foynes laughed, in spite of the passion that was rousing in him. "I have heard ye declare ye would always call a spade a spade, but I niver expected to hear ye say a respectable tradesman was a *rake*. Now I don't want to be quarrelling, Mr. Garrin; I'd rather be friends for the sake of Mary. Won't you now be afther shaking hands an' giving us both a smile by way of approval?"

Michael Garrin certainly did not shake hands nor smile (he was not in the habit of doing either), but he took a tighter grip of the stick he carried, and he looked a darker glance (which was just barely possible) from beneath his bushy eyebrows. Perhaps he thought the invitation to smile was a sarcasm.

"Get indoors," he said to Mary, not deigning to answer Foynes; "get indoors, an' thin I'll know ye're safe. I'll not trust ye in the company of such as he."

"You can spare your sneers, bailiff Garrin; I'm not hated an' accursed, an' that's the feeling that goes to the likes of you; my name's not used to frighten children wid; I don't oppress the

poor and pay informers to make traitors of my enemies an' thin hang 'em. My hand is not raised against the owdl an'"—

"Oh, hush, Robert. Hush!"

"Let him go on, let him go on. I only want a witness by."

"I'll be a witness, Michael Garrin!" said the voice of a man who, coming along the undulated road, had approached the heated group without being noticed. "I can witness to a dale of things," continued the voice, which almost hissed through a pair of thick-set jaws, and in no friendly way. "I can testify to the misery ye've brought on me an' mine; and that's sufficient for your death warrant in *our court*."

The speaker was a ragged and ill-looking peasant, half-drunk, and he spoke to Garrin with a scowling bravado. Garrin turned pale, then blue; for a moment he seemed half-cowed by the threat. Mary was frightened, and Robert looked startled.

"This blessed day ye have turned my bastes off the land that is mine by lease. It's three times I've been evicted by ye from the farms of different landlords that give ye yer dirty employment. Flesh an' blood won't stand much more, Mr. Garrin."

"Be blaming yer drunken habits an' not me an' my duty," replied the bailiff, with less passion than might have been expected from him.

"An' is it you that should be throwing the drop o' sperrits in my face? By my sowl! ye drink as much yerself."

"I don't want to be afther talking to ye, Tim Rooney. Ye've used threats aginst me, an' it'll be black for you av harrum should come my way." He was about to turn and go, when, Rooney's voice and look of cunning arrested his steps for a moment.

"It won't be my hand that would dale out the punishment—av any war to fall." Tim Rooney paused; there was just a little cautiousness among his present drunken stupidity, but apparently not sufficient to stop his tongue at this dangerous point. "I'm not one of the bhoys myself, but I've happened to hear of their doings." As he delivered these words he unfortunately chanced to bestow upon Robert Foynes a drunken and knowing smile, which might or might not have appeared to the observers to convey a meaning, such as an understanding between the two men. "There be others that watch your work, my thieving bailiff, an' may be they won't be as peaceful as poor quiet Tim Rooney."

Mary had turned to Robert with terror on her face. The young man was annoyed by Rooney's talk, and as he glanced towards the tall figure which still stood on the mould, he saw the fierce look of hatred and warning which Garrin was directing towards him. But it was brief, and the bailiff strode homeward, leaving Mary, as though he had forgotten her presence.

Tim, with a jeering laugh, like one who stood the victor after a quarrel, resumed his walk down the road towards Lennis; but after a few steps he loitered, waiting for Robert Foynes to join and walk in his company. Mary did not wish her lover to do this; and Robert did not intend it, but having already moved a few paces in that direction, he hesitated at making an excuse and trying to get rid of Rooney in that way.

"Is that man waiting for you, Robert?" Mary asked.

"It looks like that."

"But you won't walk with him; you won't have anything to do with him, anyhow; will you, Robert dear?"

"Not av I can help it; but I can't tell the feller to get away out of it."

"Why not; he's not company for the likes of you, though he seems quite familiar wid ye. You don't associate wid such as he—do you, Robert? Oh, I hope ye're not banded wid those fearfulmen."

The girl looked anxiously into the young man's face, in a piteous appeal for a denial of her cause for fear. Robert, however, had grown suddenly petulant, and seemed vexed and restless, and, instead of his usual loving look, turning his eyes away from her.

"Oh, niver throuble your heart through fear of me; I can mind myself," he said, adding, as if answering his own thoughts, "but I'm no coward."

"Well, I suppose you'll be wantin' to get back to the house," he continued, "an' I must be away to Lennis. I'll come along the road here to-night, if nothing prevents me."

After an embrace they parted, Mary hurrying to her home, Robert walking towards the village with an air of vexation and depression. Foynes, although he tried to pass the man by walking quickly, was joined by Tim Rooney, who made haste to converse with that freedom which the whisky had given to his tongue.

"An' ye'll be wid us to-night, av course, Mr. Foynes," the fellow took an early opportunity of remarking.

"Well, I'm not going to be afther risking my life in the hands of any drunken idiots," said Robert, coldly and doggedly.

"Ye'll be likely to keep yer oath and strike fur yer countrhy?"

Young Foynes did not answer, but walked on with a stubborn and dejected look. The other was watching him closely and impudently. Then Rooney, as though determined to keep to the subject, spoke again.

"I dessay you'll be knowing the work that's to be settled to-night?"

At this, Robert stopped and turned savagely to his companion. "Tim Rooney! av you don't stop your clatter it'll be a row I'll have wid ye. It's sorry I am that I've got mixed up wid ye; but," he added, as though answering Tim's glare, "I'll keep my oath."

"An' I'd advise you to do that," returned Rooney, with great meaning. "Maybe ye'll remember what happened to ould M'Kail, an' his nevvy too, an' Jim Taylor, an' Corny Angus, an' hundreds more, not only in the countrhy here, but across the water, in England. It's a bad thing to be a traitor, Mr. Foynes."

"Then mind *you* niver try to presarve yer skin that way, Tim Rooney. But I'm afther having a letter from Castlebar, an' I must go there this very day; so I can't be among yer to-night."

"That's bad!" said Rooney, "every one must be represtant, so you must git a friend to draw for you."

"To draw!"

"Av course, or how'll we settle who's to do—the work?"

The muscles of Robert's face twitched as he heard these words, but he still walked steadily onward, his eyes fixed rigidly before him.

The silence was broken no more until they reached the village. Then Rooney, as he turned towards a hovel which stood a little away from the road, said, "Take a fool's advice, and don't be off to Castlebar to-day. The boys mightn't like it."

Robert made no reply, but as he got out of the company of the dissipated fellow, he muttered earnest and wild imprecations upon his own folly.

II.

In one of the dirtiest lanes in the neighbourhood of Lennis, and about a quarter of a mile distant from the village, stood a two-roomed cabin inhabited by an ancient dame familiarly known as the Widow Breen. This old woman was without family, but kept a morose-looking and seldom-washed girl as an attendant. The Widow Breen sold whisky, and by this means she gained a livelihood. The spirit was sold cheap, and was proportionately bad; and the retailer would never give credit; "no pence, no whisky," was her motto in trading. The inner apartment of the cabin was kept private to the use of the old woman and her servant, but was furnished with only poor ideas to comfort, and with a very doubtful cleanliness. The other and larger room was the "shop;" in it the customers congregated, and made the best use of a long and narrow ricketty table, which dirt had tainted to a blackness, and three wooden seats, each capable of holding three persons of ordinary width. The hard and well-trod earth was the floor, and the thatch, which hung across the black rafters, was the only ceiling.

Towards ten o'clock in the evening of the day already spoken of, there were assembled in this room about a dozen men, two-thirds of whom bore plainly in their appearance the evidence of their poverty, a condition brought about by either misfortune or idleness, and in some cases by both. The three seats were fully occupied, and the surplus sat on the table; two tallow candles stood in bottle-necks, though the glass was scarcely visible through the thick mass of grease which had been allowed to collect and remain. A big and blazing turf fire burnt brightly beneath the chimney. Two mugs, three odd cups, and two drinking-glasses had to do service for the dozen customers. A large iron pot stood beside the fire; at present it contained hot water ready for the brewing of punch, if such should be called for; it was also the utensil for the boiling of the family potatoes.

There was little else of household goods in the trading apartment of the Widow Breen, and from one point of view this was an advantage—there was less to break when the drinkers became excitable.

On the occasion with which we are now concerned Mrs. Breen betook herself to her "own room," after gathering the coppers and supplying her customers, for she had an idea that there was business astir.

In the eyes of many of the people of Lennis

the widow's whisky shop was a disreputable hole, but latterly the regular frequenters had been augmented by some decently respectable men, who, however, only attended the shop in the darkness of night, and unknown to all save a chosen few.

Tim Rooney, now sober through his inability to get more "spirits," was among those assembled in the shop, and he soothed the monotony of the passing time by borrowing the pipes of one and then another of his neighbours, and smoking therefrom. It was evident that some one was waited for, and there was not a little muttered grumbling and impatience on account of the absentee. At last the outer door opened, the cold wind entered and made the lighted candles flare, and Robert Foynes, pale and weary, stepped in from the lane.

The salutations were cold on the part of the new arrivals, and scarcely enthusiastic from those who had been waiting. Robert would not partake of drink, though he ordered and paid for a glass; and very soon they were all clustered round the fire, after taking care that the two doors were closed and free from watchers.

The proceedings which followed were conducted almost in silence. Twelve pieces of paper, identical in size and appearance, and already folded and prepared, were thrown into a hat, and the opening of this was covered by a handkerchief. Then, after seeing that the pieces were properly mixed, each one present took in turn a paper from the covered hat, and then resumed his former seat.

"Now, let the man who has the cross speak," said one, who seemed to conduct the ceremony.

Each bit of paper was eagerly unfolded.

A dead and solemn silence prevailed; the only sound was the crackling of the turf as the fire played upon it.

"I have the cross!"

It was Robert Foynes that had spoken, huskily and lowly, and his face paled as though all blood had fled from it.

"It has happened as I feared it might," he murmured inaudibly.

"A week, seven days, is the time allowed for the work; isn't it, boys?" said the apparent leader.

Several voices there were that answered. "Yis, a week;" "no more;" "no, not an hour!"

"Not a blessed minit!" Tim Rooney declared emphatically, when the rest were done; and there were gleams of satisfaction in Tim's eyes.

No more was said about the business, and Robert Foynes early muttered an excuse about having to be off home, and was the first to depart, as he had been the last to come. He was very glad to get into the cool air again, that the wild disorder of his brain might settle into calm, and that he might be alone—and think.

But what were his thoughts? Horror, distraction, and fear! An awakened conscience—a jaded spirit; a sickening feeling of dread, and a hatred against himself, against those whom he had just left, and the task that had fallen upon him.

He walked wildly on, out of the lane, towards and through the village, and away on the road beyond. The night had been wet and dark, but now the rain had ceased and the moon's rays shone at times through the broken clouds that raced beneath her.

The young man's steps were not destined for any particular place; but still he eagerly strode in the one direction, as though impelled by an unacknowledged idea that there his best safety lay. But his legs were tired, not through toil, but through weariness of heart. He threw his stick into the roadside as he walked, that he might be freer to wring his hands and writhe in the anguish of his soul.

"What is it I have done? Oh! what is it I have done!" he cried piteously; covering with his hands his eyes and brow in an unavailing effort to deaden the mad memory. "How can I escape! Oh! I cannot do a murder! Least of all upon that man, for he is her—"

He paused, affrighted. A dark shadow stood near him! Then he saw that it was but the reflection of a twisted and leafless tree. He was reassured, though he shuddered slightly as he fancied that the shadow bore in its form some resemblance to the dark gallows. His conscience had made a coward of him. But he grew more cautious, and ceased the aspirated utterance of his thoughts.

"It is the irony of an accursed fate that has made me chosen for the work. But I won't do it. Then I'll lose my own life. The society wouldn't fail to take its vengeance. Oh, cursed drink! that led me to take the oath, an' make myself a slave to the acts of those hellish devils. Oh Mary, Mary! if you only knew how yer poor boy has fallen! But, thank God! you don't know at all!"

In a little while he restrained himself, and had a calmer bearing, but the excitement still filled his mind, and tossed his thoughts into confusion. He began to investigate a wild impracticable scheme of escape; and he bent down his head and kept his eyes away from surrounding objects that he might the better think. No heed was being paid to the distance and to the country that was traversed; but suddenly his reverie was broken by the sound of a voice:

"Robert!"

Then as he stopped with a startled gasp, he saw that Mary Garrin was by his side, and that the home of the bailiff stood but a few yards away on the left.

"And what it ye're afther, coming from home so late as this?" she asked, pleasantly. "Shure you haven't come along at this time of the night to see me," she added, with a mock appearance of jealousy.

"I was walking to get rid of—a headache."

"But you don't ask what I'm doing on the road in this way. Faix thin, that shows you'll not be caring much. But I'll tell ye all the same. My uncle after staying at home all the afternoon, has gone out to the drink again, an' its frightened I am that he'll be meetin' trouble on the road. For I found in the house a note to my uncle, full of horrible threats, an' marked wid the bones an' skull. An' oh Robert, I trimble to think that some day it may happen. How can people be so wicked?" She was silent for a moment, her eyes now full of tears; then she looked at her lover with an unspeakable anguish. "What if it may be to-night!"

Robert turned his face from her, making pretence of trying to discern something on the road. "You must be rid av these fears, Mary darlin'," he said. "Run home, this is not a fit place for

you. I'll stand where I am on the road and watch you safe into the house. I'll see that Michael Garrin comes back to ye unharmed; I'll come wid him myself, if need be."

He put his lips to her cheek—not the daring kiss he had been used to give, but a shrinking touch, emblem of unworthiness. Then he pointed towards the cottage. Perhaps it was the solemnity of his voice and manner, so unusual as it was, that impressed the girl, but she obeyed him without a word.

He watched her trip to her home, and saw her disappear through the dim fitful moonlight; then, still standing where she had left him, he burst into tears, and wept like a strong man whose heart was breaking beneath a trouble.

III.

MR. DERMOTT saw very plainly that matters in his district were assuming an awkward look. Four days after we last saw him he was the recipient of a threatening notice, and by news which had just come to him he heard that a neighbouring landlord had been fired at when driving home on the night previous.

Mr. Dermott was expecting a call from Michael Garrin, and at the usual hour the bailiff arrived at the hall, cold and expressionless as usual.

"Disaffection seems to be spreading all around us, Garrin," said the landlord during the conversation. "The bearing of some of the tenants has been almost insolent when I've met them during the last few days. I don't like it at all."

"But have they threatened you, sir? I've received three warnings, the last, which came four days ago, was marked 'final'."

"Bless me!" ejaculated Dermott. "I've received one, and that's one too many. But you never spoke of this before. Why was that, Garrin?"

"Well I'm seldom caring to trouble others wid my affairs, they generally meddle enough, widout invitation."

Mr. Dermott looked at Michael with a keen searching glance.

"Look here, Garrin," he said, "Is it trying to kill yerself you are? You've been heavily at the drink this morning, early as it is?"

"No, sir, it's not killing I mane, leastwise not by the drink, for that's not the shortest way."

Dermott, knowing the dogged disposition of the man, said no more; he had never been able to understand this taciturn, unaffable fellow, and indeed in that respect he had failed no more than had the rest of Garrin's acquaintance. The bailiff always kept his thoughts, his desires, and his fears to himself.

"I would advise you to take great care, Garrin," said the owner, when business was through and the man was going, "they might be making a target of you."

Garrin returned a strange smile (as any smile from his hard face must be), and he seemed complacent and fearless. Mr. Dermott did not put any special meaning to the look then, but some days after subsequent events made him fancy that there was an interpretation, and that he had found it.

On the day following this interview there was a number of the constabulary force drafted into the district in which Lennis lay, and two armed constables were appointed to do duty upon the estate of Mr. Theodore Dermott.

And it was on the evening of the same day that Robert Foynes and Mary Garrin met near the girl's home, and walked along the road together.

"Oh, tell me, Robert, what is it that's been ailing ye these last days; you haven't been yourself at all. It's unkind ye are to make a secret av the trouble, an' I know you've got one?"

"You know--what?"

"There ye go again--starting--an' looking almost angry. Maybe it's rid of me you want to be?"

"Mary"—he stopped and placed his arm around her—"don't let that thought cross yer. I have a trouble, an' a mighty one; but I can't tell it, an' you can't help me wid it. Don't let's be gloomy to-night; I'll try an' throw the cloud off me." They went on in silence for awhile, then he added, "It's hard entirely to make way in the odd country, here; av I were to emigrate, wud ye go with me, Mary?"

"I could not leave my uncle, Robert; not yet."

"Then I must go alone, an' you must come to me."

"But my uncle; it would be cruel av I were to leave the country an' him in it. But what has made you think of going away?"

"Oh, Mary, could yer uncle be got to come wid us?" he asked, quickly, and disregarding her question.

"Maybe he might, after the winter's over."

"That would be too late!" was the mournful reply.

"Too late—for what?" She had suddenly stopped, standing motionless; her gaze changing to one of suspicion and dread. Her thin lips trembled slightly, and her voice became sad. "Robert, I begin to see what's the matter. There's something astir against my uncle—an'—an' you know about it. Maybe"—she began to sob—"maybe—oh, it's hard to say such a word!—but tell me—tell me that ye haven't a hand in it."

He made a movement towards her, but she gently waved him back, and he merely said, very faintly, "Mary, how can you be talking like that?"

"Yonder is the polis, just round the hill there. Av there is anything that should be towld them, go now and save yourself from a great sin. But, Robert—never speake—not look at me—till the load is taken from off yer conscience?"

She had bravely borne up and preserved a dignity of calm, and after saying this she slowly and sorrowfully walked away, leaving her lover standing alone in the road.

He had little thought of following her; her rebuke had, to him, been so unanswerable, so heart-scourging, that he suddenly felt unworthy to be near her presence. It seemed to him that even this peasant girl could read his coward and wicked heart. How then was he to hope for an escape from the crafty? Was his manner and speech so tell-tale that a mere young girl could read a story from it?

He had no time for expressions of anguish now; the cold sweat of fear was issuing through

his pores. He returned to Lennis, trembling like an ague-stricken man. But by the time he had got well into the village, a sort of desperate courage had come to him, and after stopping and inwardly debating for a moment, he turned down a muddy lane, and entered the whisky shop of the Widow Breen.

There were many of the general customers present, and Robert's arrival was the cause of many exchanged glances, some denoting satisfaction, some impatience and doubt. Young Foynes commenced drinking eagerly, and he made a pretence of being in a great good humour. By-and-by a man came in, who, after observing that Robert was in the room, made the remark that "Ould Garrin was drinking heavily at the Hare an' Hounds, an' his steps would be mighty unstraight all the way home that night."

"Are ye afther hitting the crow ye fired at today, Mr. Foynes?" asked Rooney with his impudent stare.

"No, but I was near him," said Robert, after an evasive pause.

"May be it'll be ready for pie by to-morrow?"

Foynes nodded, then called for another glass of the spirit, and drinking it left the cabin. An ill-favoured man closely followed him.

IV.

"My dear, this is dreadful news indeed," exclaimed Mr. Dermott as he burst into the room in which his wife was sitting, "here's Halloran's boy just come up with word that Michael Garrin has been shot, and is at home dying this very minit."

"Oh, how shocking!" said Mrs. Dermott with great concern. "And dear me, I believe his niece Mary is in this house now. I saw her go round to the back, she comes to see cook."

"Keep her here, and I'll run down and see what can be done."

"Take great care," shouted the anxious wife as her husband hurried away.

Mrs. Dermott went to the kitchen, intending to break the news to the girl, and found that she was too late. Halloran's boy, fearful of losing such a chance of being important, had hurried round after dismissal from his first message, and had blurted all he knew to the astonished domestics. Poor Mary had fainted just as she passed through the door, and now she lay, like a lifeless form, on a long couch in the room. Those around her began to fear that the shock had killed her, for she seemed almost pulseless, her face was deadly pale and cold, and her jaws set in a firm and close grip. The doctor was sent for, though it was expected that if he were near he would be already engaged by the side of the dying bailiff. In a little over half an hour after his departure Mr. Dermott returned to the Hall, and by that time Mary had—to the joy of those who watched—showed signs of revived life. Under the master's cooler directions the girl gradually recovered consciousness, and then soon demanded to know where her uncle was placed, and if the news were really true. It seemed that her thoughts were divided between two persons, for she asked—

"Oh tell me, tell me the worst—who was it that murdered him?"

"You will know all soon enough, my poor girl," said Mr. Dermott kindly. "Wait till your strength comes back and then I'll tell you the sorrowful news."

"No, no, sir, tell me now; the suspense would be killing me."

"It is very pitiful that you should have to listen to so sad a story."

"Sad! Oh yes— Ah, I know why you shrink at the name. Av it had been anyone else you might have taould me at onest. But mayn't there be a doubt? Is it rightly known? Oh let me go."

"There is no room for doubt. Your uncle was shot—"

"By whom?"

"By his own hand. He was always strange and morose, poor fellow; but it was the drink—it was the drink that had driven him mad, and the threats maybe, and made him do it."

And at the inquest it was all proved. Michael Garrin, who in his latter years had lived hateful to many and miserable in himself, had died the death of a suicide. By the time the event was coolly discussed no one was inclined to be surprised at this last act of the bailiff; he had always been in a degree inexplicable, and had habitually—no doubt—viewed his own life as a worthless and joyless possession. But when he discharged the revolver at himself he was clearly under the heavy influence of a prolonged drinking bout.

This had happened on the afternoon following the night upon which Robert Foynes had attended the Widow Breen's, and the whisky consumed by the young man on that occasion and the coercion practised by the bad associates had not been sufficiently strong to pervert the better part of Robert's nature. Maybe he would have paid dearly for his resolution if the bailiff had not died in the manner he did.

But so far this narrative relates to occurrences which are quite three years old; and now there is a certain white house standing on the hillside just eastward of Lennis, and therein happily and peacefully dwell Robert Foynes and his dark-haired young wife, Mary. Robert is steadier in habits, and cooler in reasoning, now; and is a particularly lucky man, especially in having managed to get rid of some unfortunate connections of his hot and wayward youth.

SONNET.

I TRIED to walk alone amid life's maze,
I would not take the hand stretched forth to lead;
I did not deem that I should e'er have need;
That when I fell, myself I could not raise;
That when I sang, I had no one to praise;
Sufficient that I could not breathe one creed—
So stood aside: nor deemed that I might heed
God's voice alone; proud rather of the craze
Of questioning unbelief.

Hard was the way,
Cruelly hard; once more God took my hand,
And touched my heart; my head was bent and grey.

He did not speak. Across the winter-land
I saw Heaven's light and entered into day.

J. E. PANTON.

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER V.

FRIENDS.

"I THINK he is quite a bear. He passed me in the Bail—he certainly did move—but, Mr. Pulsford, Edith is always his champion, yet she cannot know so much about him, not nearly so much as I. Oh, his father was a complete ogre! When we were children we were afraid of him and always got out of his way. No one seemed to mind when he died. Such a terribly proud man, with a sneer for every one. How he got into the minster, no one seems to know. I know he had nothing. Mamma says he married a somebody who was a nobody, and his friends cast him off. There must have been something disgraceful about it all, for they never would have anything further to do with him."

The speaker was Cicely Devensey, sitting the same evening in Lady Mary's drawing-room, the ubiquitous Mr. Pulsford her *vis-à-vis*. Edith Heron sat shadowed in a chimney corner, once or twice contesting monosyllabically Cicely's assertions. Mr. Pulsford was anything but comfortable. He felt that Cicely Devensey was engrossing him, that Edith Heron should have had his attention; the glances he directed towards the latter were almost comical in their abject guilt. A certain spice of satisfaction would have possessed his soul had he any ground to believe that Edith resented the situation. But Edith looked so calm, there was not a sign in her immobile face that she was vexed, or that there was fear of Cicely ousting her from Mr. Pulsford's heart. Mr. Pulsford had his thoughts. How different Cicely Devensey was to Edith Heron. He would have been more happy had Edith the same "gush" Cicely so freely rendered, and yet it was clear to him that Edith showed the better breeding and was a far more distinguished girl than her friend, consequently a greater catch for him. He began to feel how much she was above him. He could not well retire now, moreover it was too much for his self-love. He looked at Cicely, then at Edith. Edith Heron was far superior in appearance and dignity, she was more accomplished, her connections were certainly higher in the scale than Cicely's. As he sat there, Edith Heron's voice, subdued, yet breathing a mild remonstrance against all depreciated people, seemed to float to him as from some charmed sphere, giving to the tone of Cicely Devensey's voice a dissonant metallic ring.

"Aunty says she was a governess, poor girl," replied Edith, quietly, "and they *are* nobodies. Her father was a hardworking clergyman, but poor—"

"Now, Edith, we don't look upon you in the light of a governess," said Cicely desperately, feeling the calm dignity of Edith's remonstrance a well-merited reproach. "We all know that you

have been so unfortunate. Does Mr. Pulsford know?"

"I have no doubt he does," said Edith quickly, "or he surmises, or he would not expect to find me daily governess to the Dean's children."

"Perhaps Lady Mary has told you all about her misfortunes and Edith's," murmured Cicely to her *vis-à-vis*.

"No—" stammered Mr. Pulsford; "Mrs. Pomfret mentioned something of the kind to me, some time ago." Mr. Pulsford was uncomfortable and nervous, and a little afraid. He was alarmed at Cicely beginning to rake up a buried past.

"If aunty were in," laughed Edith, "she would exclaim in a moment, 'What does she know about it, not half so much as we know about it ourselves.' People seem to have an idea that we should carry long faces with us always, because we have met with reverses. Aunty and I don't mind it half so much as people would have us. We are very happy together. Other people have been victimized and defrauded, why should we cry out more than they? all the more reason for us to remain silent. I don't mind who knows we are poor, but I should be too proud to be always airing a grievance."

"Fie, Edith, you are thinking again of the Aylmers."

"Really, Cicely—"

Edith felt annoyance, but Cicely was not to be arrested in her torrent of condemnation.

"It was stupid on their part going against their friends. I have no pity for such people. I wonder if this man ever feels resentful against his father. Mr. Aylmer has his father to thank in a great measure for the bad impression he has made. Papa says he would much rather have Mr. Aylmer uphill than a young man agreeable and fond of society. He takes the common people off our hands—those people who would go to the dispensary and shirk their weekly payments. Poor people (Cicely pronounced it 'pore') are so abominably improvident and reckless and unprincipled—"

"Perhaps they would pay if they could," returned Edith; "they have illnesses in the cold weather when they are out of employment. Perhaps we are ignorant of their hardships. And, Cicely, you were wrong thinking I had the Aylmers in my mind. It is very little I know of Mr. Aylmer; I have never been in his company—never once."

Mr. Pulsford noted her show of indignation, her rising colour, for all she was in the dark corner, and he observed these signs with some uneasiness.

"Pooh, Edith, you know Dick is always full of him. He says everything he thinks, Dick does. I am quite weary of hearing him sing this Mr. Aylmer's praises. He annoys papa with so much of it. Mr. Aylmer has all that stuff about being generous to poor people and excusing them payment."

"Poor people have many calls on their slender means. I believe poor people would pay if they could," said Edith.

Cicely shook her head. "You don't know them, Edith. They have the opinion that medical attendance ought to go unrequited. I tell you, Edith, you don't know them as I do. Haven't you

found them dreadfully encroaching, Mr. Pulsford?"

"I have not been brought into contact with them much, Miss Devensey," said he propitiously. "You see, poor people do not often indulge in music lessons, or I might have discovered the truth of your remarks."

"You are a happy man, Mr. Pulsford. I often wonder how Mr. Aylmer contrives to live. He has not many good patients, and I do not think he has any private means. He cannot keep a horse. I am surprised that Dick should make such a friend of him. I believe it is there where he gets all his rebellious ways. He always finds a refuge there after he and papa have had words."

"Cicely, I wonder how you can have so cruel an opinion of people of whom you know so little," cried Edith.

"You hear, Mr. Pulsford; Edith will not have her Mr. Aylmer decried. If he only knew how she defended him."

There was some mischief in Cicely's voice. It was as if she were maliciously endeavouring to sow discord under the thin pretence of banter.

"Really, Cicely, this is too much," remonstrated Edith in an offended tone. "I have distinctly said I have little knowledge of Mr. Aylmer. I would not think ill of any one unless I had sufficient grounds, and then I would not magnify it. It is very likely your brother finds a good friend in Mr. Aylmer, and he advises your brother well."

"Now," persisted Cicely, "are you not in Dick's confidence? Has he not trumpeted in your ear praises of his friend? Confess, dear, you are not so innocent of their habits as you would have us suppose. Dick would always be extolling him at home, if we only heeded him. I know Dick cannot be five minutes anywhere without alluding to him. According to Dick's own account, he has some peculiarities. Dick always comes away unbearably strong of tobacco. You must have observed that yourself, Edith?"

"I do not object to tobacco. I always think smoking men are manly."

"Do you smoke, Mr. Pulsford?" asked Cicely.

"No. I never could overcome a repugnance to tobacco, Miss Devensey; at least, I never seemed to care for it."

"You must learn to smoke, Mr. Pulsford."

Edith looked uncomfortable, but Cicely was apparently on very good terms with herself.

"I think, Mr. Pulsford," resumed Cicely smoothly, "we have much the same opinion of the habit. I detest men who smoke; I could never tolerate a smoker. Edith is more charitable; she always leans to the merciful."

"You are more resolute and outspoken, Miss Devensey—"

"Oh, I am not headstrong, Mr. Pulsford. No one is more reasonable than I am. Dick has all that in our family. I can always yield if I can be led to perceive a good reason for yielding."

"Will not every one be reasonable when they are compelled to admit they are in the wrong?" inquired Edith.

"Really now, Edith, to throw such a shaft—you should know the character of your humble servant. Have you ever found me unreasonable or exacting? You wish to make me appear odious

in Mr. Pulsford's eyes. Fie, Edith! Is not Edith a little unfair, Mr. Pulsford?" asked Cicely, attempting an ingenuous pleading.

Mr. Pulsford felt himself at a loss for a reply.

Meanwhile Cicely rose and crossed the room, tapping Edith on the shoulder with hypocritical humility. A book she held in her hand—a book she had opened idly, but had not relinquished. Cicely had discovered Edith with it when Davis ushered her into the room.

"What book are you reading, Miss Devensey?" asked Mr. Pulsford.

"Oh, I am not reading it. I simply took the book up when Edith laid it down. I see it is an old keepsake. The prints in them are always so much better than the reading."

"Oh, I thought perhaps it was a novel."

"No, only a picture book. I was looking at the print of Virginia Water. I wish we had a beautiful piece of water like it, instead of our muddy river. How nice it would be for boating and skating. The Thames must be beautiful."

"Very possibly the Thames is flattered," suggested Mr. Pulsford.

"Oh, no—flatter?" laughed Cicely, boisterously, "really Mr. Pulsford. Oh, what a pun. Edith, did you catch it? Oh, Mr. Pulsford!"

"I assure you, Miss Devensey, I did not mean it."

"We will forgive you, Mr. Pulsford, when you have made a better. Edith, may I show Mr. Pulsford the photograph of Chesterton. There is some beautiful water there. You know, Mr. Pulsford, Edith's aunt and old Sir Aubrey were old lovers. He sent the photograph to Lady Mary. You see he never forgot Lady Mary. Perhaps you have shown it, Edith?"

"No," replied Edith, colouring, "I have not. I did not think Mr. Pulsford would be interested in it."

"Perhaps you do not care to have it shown."

"I do not mind. It is not mine, it is aunty's."

"Oh it is such a beautiful place, Mr. Pulsford; such fine trees about it, and three fishponds. You see the swans in the photograph. And that Mr. Aylmer's father lost it. It can never come to this one, for Sir Aubrey married, and has sons. I didn't know until the other day Mr. Aylmer's history; Lady Mary told me all about it, and shewed me the photograph. You were out, dear. What a strange thing it is; one may live in a place so long and yet know so little of one's near neighbours."

Edith Heron groaned inwardly. Poor garrulous Lady Mary, when her tongue was unloosed. Even if she disliked people, if once her tongue got started, out everything came; she seemed as if she could not help telling everything that came in sequence. But a little interest to be simulated, Lady Mary only required "yes" and "no" in their proper places, and nods of apprehension.

"I asked Mr. Desforges if he knew," continued Cicely, "and I might have trod on his gouty foot, he was so shorty. Your aunt said Sir Aubrey would have done something for this young man when his father died, but his assistance was declined. Even when he was a boy, this Mr. Aylmer, you see, was self-willed and independent and very obstinate. I asked Dr. Desforges if that were true, but he would not say one way or the

other. He never will hear a word reflecting on Mr. Aylmer. He told me very bluntly that Mr. Aylmer had a fine temper."

"Well, Cicely, you don't owe him any ill-will? He no doubt acted according to his own feeling. Perhaps he resented the neglect of his father."

"I think it was very stupid of him," said Cicely; "but how could he be anything else having such a father."

"No doubt Mr. Aylmer would reply courteously," said Edith.

"You hear, Mr. Pulsford, Edith will not have her *preux cavalier* abused."

"Cicely!" exclaimed Edith, her eyes flashing fire, "if you will persist in such folly, I must request you not to recur to Mr. Aylmer."

"But he had a godmother," persisted Cicely, addressing Mr. Pulsford, "a real fairy godmother, and she wrote to him and congratulated him upon his pluck; she said it would properly punish old Sir Aubrey."

"Where do you get all your information, Cicely?" asked Edith Heron in astonishment.

"I keep my ears open, dear. He has a chance yet, if he does not offend this old fairy, for she is rich. But he is sure to offend her, and then she will not leave him anything. It will be a great chance if his godmother does as much for him as mine did for me."

"She forgot your brother, and he was a godchild too."

"It was his own fault. He behaved stupidly. Someone else got his five thousand pounds."

"Poor Richard!"

"He said he didn't care for the old woman, and he wouldn't run after her. If she couldn't leave him her money without so much fuss, she could go to Jericho if she liked. Papa was very much vexed—Oh, he was vexed! For Dick quite threw away his chance. Had he gone two or three times a week and taken a hand at whist, it would have been all right. It would not have mattered then if Dick wished to be lazy. She never would have a window open, not the hottest day in summer. Dick said the house stifled him and the old lady's talk worried him. She was always complaining; it was somebody's sewer, or some other body's chimney that was killing her. I bore with her megrims, and I lost nothing by it. Let what come what will, I shall always have something to rely upon, and it is invested safely—I was careful of that. It is so dreadful to be poor, is it not, Mr. Pulsford?"

"Very dreadful," remarked Mr. Pulsford.

"I should be afraid to be poor," Cicely added.

"Cicely, you might lose it the same as poor aunty did," said Edith, "she thought her money was safe enough."

"No! No!" said Cicely, with a shake of her head, "that is impossible. It is in good Government securities. I don't get so much interest as I might elsewhere, but it is safe. That foolish Dick—I can never forgive him—he got nothing. She always believed him good-for-nothing. She always found Dick out. I expect when Dick gets old he will be always coming to me."

"Poor Dick!" murmured Edith compassionately, "I am sorry for him."

(To be continued.)

ANECDOTES OF MEDICAL CELEBRITIES.

THE name of Dr. John Radcliffe, thanks to his munificent bequests to the city of Oxford, is still fresh in the minds of men although nearly a couple of centuries have passed since his death. Everywhere the visitor to that classic seat of learning is confronted with something to remind him of the fashionable court physician of Queen Anne's days. The Radcliffe Infirmary, the Observatory, the Radcliffe Library, and various scholarships in connection with the University, are all lasting memorials of his generosity. The fact of his leaving upwards of £40,000 to a city with which in lifetime he had but little to do, is typical of the man both as showing his liberality and his eccentricity. Born at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in the year 1650, Dr. Radcliffe, whilst still a young man, settled in London where he practised as a physician with much success. In 1686, his reputation was such that he was appointed physician to the Princess Anne of Denmark, and after the Revolution he continued in high favour with King William III. until he offended that Prince by his too great freedom of speech. Many are the stories that have come down to us of his brusquerie to the royal patients who honoured him with their confidence. Thus on one occasion when he attended William III., and the king exhibiting his swollen ankles asked Radcliffe's opinion of them, the outspoken doctor replied, "Why truly, I would not have your Majesty's two legs for your three kingdoms." A similar cause gave rise to his quarrel with the Princess Anne of Denmark, afterwards that Queen Anne of whose decease we are even now sometimes reminded. The lady, like many more of her sex, at the present day, was much troubled with her nerves which became a constant source of annoyance to her physician requiring his attendance at all and the most inconvenient of times. It happened once that Dr. Radcliffe was sitting over his bottle of wine at the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street (celebrated physicians did such things in those days) when a messenger arrived ordering his immediate attendance at St. James's. Having entered upon his second bottle, the physician appeared to be in no hurry to depart, and on the arrival of a second messenger, with a still more peremptory command, Dr. Radcliffe, who was now gloriously in liquor, sent word "Tell (hic) Royal Highness (hic) shan't come. She's got vapourish (hic) as well as any woman insh world (hic) only sh' won't believe it (hic)." The insult the princess never forgave to the day of her death, and when she afterwards succeeded to the throne it was in consequence of this dislike that Godolphin was unable to obtain for him the post of chief physician, though his repute was such that he was consulted in all cases of emergency, and received a large sum of secret service money for his prescriptions. There is another story which connects the name of Dr. Radcliffe with that of the celebrated portrait painter, Sir Godfrey Kneller. The painter and the physician were neighbours living together in Bow Street. Sir Godfrey Kneller had a beautiful garden well stocked with flowers and exotics. Dr. Radcliffe also had a garden and was equally fond of flowers. He suggested to his neighbour that it would be a good thing to knock a hole in the wall separating their gardens and put a door

there that they might converse together. The arrangement was agreed to, and all went well until the painter, amazed at the injury done by the doctor's servants to his valuable plants, after frequent expostulations, sent word to his friend that if the annoyance continued he would be obliged to brick up the door. "Tell Sir Godfrey," said Radcliffe to the messenger, "that he may do what he likes to the door so long as he does not paint it," to which the good-humoured painter replied, "Go back and give my service to Dr. Radcliffe, and tell him I'll take anything from him—but *physic*."

Contemporary with Dr. Radcliffe was Sir Samuel Garth, a physician of eminence, but who was equally if not more renowned as a poet and man of letters. Like Radcliffe, he was a native of Yorkshire, and having obtained his degree at Cambridge, like him, he settled in London. In his early days, before he had acquired the celebrity which led to his obtaining the honour of knighthood at the hands of George I., and the appointment of physician in ordinary to the King and physician-general to the Court, he became a member of the Kit-Kat Club, which was much frequented by the young bloods of the day. Dining there upon one occasion, it happened that that he stayed drinking long after the time when he should have been off visiting his patients. A friend, after noticing the unreasonably long time the physician's carriage had been waiting outside, remarked, "Really, Garth, you ought to leave off drinking wine and look after those poor devils of patients of yours." "It is no great matter," Garth replied, "whether I see them to-night or not, for nine of them have such vile constitutions that all the doctors in the world can do nothing for them; and the other six have such good constitutions that it would take more than that number to kill them." The manner in which he first planted his foot upon the ladder of success as a fashionable physician, was, strange to say, in a measure due to his intemperate habits. It chanced that once returning, flushed and excited, from the same club, he found a message to go immediately to a lady whose husband at the time was in high favour at Court. He had been much troubled about his wife, as the leading physicians of the day had described her as suffering from a most obscure malady, and long given up the case as hopeless. On coming out of the cold night air into the hot room where the lady was, Garth felt himself so unsteady on his legs that he gasped involuntarily, "Drunk, by G—d!" Hearing this exclamation, the patient hurriedly cried, "Hush, doctor, hush! However did you find it out at once when the others failed?" Possessed of the lady's secret, Garth kept his own, and by a judicious utilization of her husband's influence the young physician's fortune was made. JAMES G.

TRIOLET.

THE time has quickly passed away
Since you and I were wed;
"Tis eighteen years ago to-day!
The time has quickly passed away:
In gladness may we ever say,
Till all our days be sped:
"The time has quickly passed away,
Since you and I were wed."

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

AN IRISHWOMAN'S STORY.

BY J. M. CALLWELL.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE MOONLIT ROAD.

"YOU are sure that you are well wrapped up, Miss Kate? The night air is sharp enough, remember, after coming out of a hot room; and you have a long drive before you."

I assured my host, Sir Richard, or, as he was more familiarly known, Dick O'Donnell, that I had quite sufficient muffling, and having seen that I was comfortably settled on my side of the car, he went round to the other to wish my father good-night. He said something to him in an undertone, of which I only caught the words "this hour of the night," and about something being "quite safe," and I smiled to myself. Did Dick not know that my father had the best hands with a horse, either riding or driving, in all the country round, and that he was acquainted with every inch of road within twenty miles, to imagine that it could not be perfectly safe for him to drive anywhere at any hour he pleased? I did not hear my father's answer, but it was probably reassuring, for with a cheery "Good-night!" we started. At the bend in the avenue which hid the house, I looked back, and saw Dick still standing on the gravel, the light falling out through the open door on his fair, boyish head, and tall, black-clad figure, as he watched us.

"Well, Kitty," my father inquired, as we trotted swiftly down the avenue, "and how did you enjoy your evening?"

It was my fifteenth birthday, and we were driving home from my first dinner party, Lady O'Donnell, Dick's mother, having begged my father to bring me over with him in honour of the day.

"Oh, I enjoyed it very much," I answered, "only the dinner was dreadfully long. Do people always have as many things to eat at a party? But Dick is such fun, and I don't think there's any one in the world as nice as Lady O'Donnell. She said I was to make you bring me over soon to spend a long day with her. You will, won't you?" I added, coaxingly.

"Well, we'll see about it, Kitty," my father returned good-humouredly, and I said no more, knowing from old experience that my father undertaking to "see about" any wish of mine was tantamount to its being gratified.

"The drive back will be the best part of it all," I went on after a while. "I do love driving on a beautiful night like this."

A beautiful night it surely was; the moon was at the full, making it almost as light as day, a fresh dewy fragrance was on the air, and in a meadow beside the lodge, where we paused for a moment for my father to get down and open the gate—the lodge people having retired to rest—a corn-crake was uttering its harsh, monotonous cry. It had been craking there when we had passed, hours before, and as I drove slowly through, and waited while my father made the gate fast again, I wondered mentally of what material corn-crakes' throats were composed. Forty years have passed since this night of which I am writing, but it is all just as clear in my mind, as if it had happened a few days ago; and when even the smallest detail of that drive fades from my memory, I shall have forgotten most things upon this earth.

We had covered more than half of the eleven Irish miles which intervened between Rathowen, the O'Donnell's place, and Kilclaughan, our own home, and were descending a tolerably steep hill, from the foot of which the road stretched away perfectly straight for a mile or more. Most part of it was in the shadow of the hedges, but some way on there was one piece on which the moonlight lay white and clear, and as we slowly drove down hill I distinctly saw a white-clad figure, that of a man as I thought, cross this moonlit piece. It

stood a moment, looking up the road in the direction from which we were coming, raised its arm as for a signal or a warning, and then disappeared into the surrounding shadow.

"Was not that curious, papa?" I said.

"Was not what curious, Kitty?"

"That white figure; did you not see it on the road just now?"

"You must be dreaming, child; what would bring a white figure, or a black one either, out on the road at this hour; there is not a house within a mile."

"But I saw it quite plainly," persisted I.

"Nonsense, dear; there is a gate into the field just there. You saw the moonlight on one of the gateposts, and took it for a figure."

I did not argue the matter further, but was none the less convinced of what I had seen. A very uneasy thought had entered into my head. It was quite true what my father had said, it was most unlikely that any one—any living, breathing being—would be out on that lonely road at that midnight hour, and certainly not any one in white, such as I had seen. Like most Irish children, my mind had been stored from my earliest years by the servants and peasantry with gruesome tales of ghosts and banshees, the beings who, in Ireland, appear to presage disaster or death in every family with any claim to ancient descent. I knew all about the dwarfish old woman who was seen wailing and wringing her hands on the avenue the evening previous to my grandfather's being killed by a fall in the hunting-field; of the fairy music that went circling round Rathowen before the death of any of the O'Donnells; of the phantom coach that drove up to another house in the county on similar occasions; and I was fully convinced that it was a banshee I had looked upon. To be sure, these dread visitants are supposed to appear in female form, generally that of a stunted old woman, or child with an elfish, wizened face; and to the best of my belief the figure I had seen was that of a man, but who would be accountable for the ways of such weird beings, or in what guise it might please them to appear to mortal eyes? But if it was a banshee, what did its appearance portend? My interests and affections centered in a very small space. Except my father, sitting hale and hearty the other side of the car, I had no one to care for. I had a step-brother, to be sure, married and living in London, years old than myself, but he hardly came into calculation at all. The relations between him and my father had never been very cordial; his visits home, within my memory, had only been one or two, and those not pleasant ones. Of late years, owing to money matters and other things, there had been an open quarrel between them. All the same, Nugent was one of us Kirwans, and the heir of Kilcaughan. Was it any mischance threatening him which had brought this apparition before my eyes?

I must own that I shivered slightly, and the hand which was resting on the rail of the car tightened its grasp as we neared that patch of moonlight on the road.

"There's your white lady for you, Kitty," said my father, pointing with his whip as the gate came into view. "See what it is to be such an imaginative little woman as you are."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when

there was a loud shout; two men, their faces blackened, and wearing shirts over their clothes, leaped out from behind the gate. One of them caught the horse's head, and brought us up with a sharp jerk, while at the same instant two other men crashed out through the hedge on the other side of the road, a few yards further down.

"Make your peace with God, Kirwan" cried the man who had caught the horse's head; "yer hour's come."

For all answer my father sprang upon the car, and aimed a heavy blow at the ruffian's head with the butt end of his whip. The man caught the blow on his arm, though with a fierce exclamation of rage and pain, but he held on doggedly, notwithstanding, as my father clucked the horse's head in a desperate effort to get free. A sharp click behind me made me turn my head, and I saw, with a horror which for the moment deprived me of all power of movement or utterance, that one of the two fellows who had sprung out behind the car had raised a large, clumsy sort of pistol, and was taking aim slowly and deliberately at my father, as he stood with his back to him not four yards away.

The moon was full on the man's face, and despite its being blackened, like those of the others, I saw every feature plainly—the coarse, stubby hair and beard, the high cheekbones, and the large, ill-shaped mouth, half-open now in the intensity of his purpose, and showing the gleaming tusk-like teeth within. It all passed, be it remembered, in one tithe of the time it has taken me to tell it, and the scene as I describe it is that which was photographed on my mind when this dark night's work was over, not any impression which in that supreme moment I was conscious of taking in.

"Fire low," the fellow standing beside him shouted, "he's got the child on the car wid him; don't ye hurt her."

The words broke the spell which for a second had paralyzed my faculties, and I started up to throw myself between my father and his murderer, and so if it might be save him. But it was too late, the crash of the report rang in my ears, my father bounded up with a cry which was half scream, half groan, and fell across the car—would have fallen on to the road if I had not caught him in my arms. The horse, terrified by the noise, plunged and reared, despite the efforts of the man at his head to hold him with his uninjured hand.

"Finish the job all out," he shouted savagely, "don't have him troublin' us agin."

"Loose yer hould; it's done, sure enough," the murderer responded. "I wish 'twas ivery black-hearted tyrant was wid him, that's all."

The other let go his hold accordingly, and the animal, released from control, tore madly homewards. As my father fell, I had instinctively clutched the reins from his nerveless fingers, and held them now, while with my other arm I supported him, his head lying back on my shoulder, and his face looking, oh, so terribly ghastly in the moonlight. At the frantic pace at which we went, we cannot have been very many minutes accomplishing the miles that still lay between us and home, but it seemed to me an endless age. The entrance gates had been left open in expectation of our return, so there was

no check there, and we dashed on up the avenue. The furious galloping of the horse, I suppose, apprised those within the house of something being wrong, for the hall door was open and some of the servants out on the steps, as we tore up. At the time, I could hardly have taken in what it all meant, but now their white, scared faces rise vividly before me, and I can still hear their ap-palled ejaculations, "God have mercy on us, the Master!"

I do not think they asked me any questions as to what had occurred; they knew too well the only meaning our return in such fashion could have. They carried my father into the house and laid him down in the hall; he was breathing still, and they forced some brandy down his throat. He opened his eyes, but they were dim already with the darkness of death, and though I was kneeling by his side, he could not see me.

"Kitty, my little Kitty! where is she," he said faintly.

I stooped and kissed him, he moved his hand in a futile effort to grasp mine, once again he whispered, more feebly than before, "My little Kitty," and then he died.

CHAPTER II.

THE FACE IN THE GAOLYARD.

THERE is a total blank in my memory after that—a blank which extends, I believe, over many weeks—but I know that, when I came to myself at last, I was in bed in my own room, and Lady O'Donnell was standing at the far end of it, talking to one of our old servants. The events of that awful night did not come back to my mind immediately, but I lay wondering in a stupid, vague way what had brought Lady O'Donnell there, and why I felt so strange and weak and helpless. I made some movement at last, they both turned, and Lady O'Donnell came across the room towards me. I gave one look at her kind, motherly, sorrowful face, and then I knew it all, and broke into a bitter cry, "Papa! Papa!"

Lady O'Donnell took me in her arms and kissed me, and rocked me to and fro as if I had been a baby, and I sobbed on her breast till, from weariness and weakness, I sobbed myself asleep. Long dreary days of convalescence followed. I did not care to get well. It seemed to me that I had lost all that was worth living for, and that the best thing for me would be to die, too, and be laid by my father's side. But life has a tenacious hold at fifteen; and so little by little I struggled back to health again.

As soon as the doctor would allow it, Lady O'Donnell, who, despite the distance, had driven over nearly every day to see me, carried me off with her to Rathowen, and so I bade farewell to my old home and the child-life that had been so happy while it lasted.

Everything that kindly sympathy could suggest was done for me at Rathowen. Sir Richard and his mother seemed to vie with each other in proofs of their thought for me and desire to please me. I tried to show myself grateful for their kindness, but I was still too heavy-hearted with the sense of my loss to make much response to

their efforts to cheer me and rouse me out of myself.

I must have been a month or more with them when Lady O'Donnell proposed one morning that we should drive into Rosslea, the county town. Since I had grown strong enough, I had accompanied her daily in her walks and drives, but it had always been on lonely country roads, and I shrank more than I could express from the thought of the busy streets and the curious gaze of strangers. But on my murmuring something of this to Lady O'Donnell, she said so decidedly, "You had much better come, dear," that I did not like to offer any further opposition.

To Rosslea accordingly we drove, but not to do shopping or marketing, as I expected. We drew up before a grim, gaunt building just outside the town, which I knew to be the county gaol.

"I am going to pay a visit to Captain and Mrs. Wray, Kate," Lady O'Donnell said as we stopped.

She seemed to be expected, for Captain Wray, the governor of the gaol, was standing outside. He helped her off the car, lifted his hat gravely on being introduced to me, and offered me his hand to alight likewise. I certainly had had no intention when we drove in of paying a visit, more especially to total strangers as Captain Wray and his wife were to me, and would have infinitely preferred staying where I was, but my heart failed me at making such an explanation as I must give, so I got down in silence, and followed Lady O'Donnell and her guide through the ponderous gateway. I heard her say, in answer to some question of his, "No, I thought it better not to tell her." To which he responded, in an emphatic tone, "Much better." And I wondered idly who the "her" was, and what Lady O'Donnell had concealed.

Mrs. Wray, a wondrously bright, brisk little woman, considering the dismal nature of her abode, received us in the Governor's residence, and we talked for some time, though my share in the conversation was only a languid one; then Lady O'Donnell said—

"Kate, Captain Wray has kindly offered to take us over the prison; I am sure it will interest you to see it, come!"

I followed obediently, and we went down stairs and along corridors, through heavy doors that had to be unlocked to let us through and which were relocked behind us. We visited several cells and were introduced to their inmates while Captain Wray explained various matters about their work and other details of prison routine to us, and told us the history and offences of some of the prisoners. At last he took us into a larger room containing the ordinary furniture of an office, with ledgers and files of papers ranged on shelves along the wall. Two men in prison garb were writing at desks—promoted for good conduct to keep the prison accounts we were told; one or two others in plain clothes were standing idly about. They glanced curiously at us as we came in, but I did not pay them much heed. The room looked into a square yard, surrounded on two sides by prison buildings, on the other two by a high wall surmounted by a bristling array of iron spikes.

"This is the exercise yard for untried prisoners," Captain Wray said, and making us stand well within the room to prevent our being seen, he told us to look out.

The yard had only three or four occupants, all of whom, except one, were pacing to and fro with a dejected lounging sort of gait. It was the last one, however, who attracted my attention; he was leaning against the wall with his back partly towards us and his eyes fixed upon the ground so that I could not well see his face. All the same there was something about his short, thick-set figure, heavy jaw, and stubby black hair which I recognized, and in a puzzled, groping way I sent my mind back to remember where I could have seen them before. So intent was I that the silence of the others did not strike me as strange till bringing my eyes back into the room I found that they all, Lady O'Donnell, Captain Wray, the prisoners, and the other men, were watching me earnestly.

"Captain Wray," I cried, quickly and eagerly, "do you see that man there, the one leaning against the wall?"

"Yes, Miss Kirwan."

"Could you make him look up for a moment, so that I could see his face?"

Captain Wray stepped forward and threw the window open; at the sound all the men in the yard raised their heads, and in the same instant I cried out, "Oh, Lady O'Donnell, that is the man who shot Papa!"

"We thought so," Captain Wray said quietly, as he closed the window and led the way from the room.

A day or two afterwards, I was served with a formal summons to appear before the magistrates at Rosslea, and give evidence against Timothy Kearney, tinker, of no fixed abode, charged with the wilful murder of John Kirwan. I was the only witness examined at this preliminary investigation, the prisoner reserving his defence, as the phrase is, and at the conclusion of what I had to say against him, he was duly committed to take his trial at the spring assizes five months away.

Before this time Lady O'Donnell had explained to me as gently and tenderly as possible the position in which I stood. After my father's death, his affairs were found to be in considerable confusion, in other words he had died heavily in debt; it had indeed been his pressing need for money, which had driven him, who was ordinarily a most easy-going, indulgent landlord, to take extreme measures against some of his defaulting tenants, that had led to his murder. His landed property, though, not without large mortgages upon it, passed to my stepbrother Nugent. Everything else he was possessed of, my father had bequeathed to me, but alas, that everything had been seized upon by his creditors, and I was penniless.

Kilcaughan was to be shut up, neither my brother nor his wife having any inclination to reside in Ireland, but Nugent, who had come over after my father's murder and returned before I was well enough to see or know him, had informed Lady O'Donnell of their willingness to give me a home with them in London. I was most unwilling to avail myself of the offer, as I knew that, in the encumbered condition of Nugent's property, their means must needs be narrow enough, and though my nearest kith and kin they were utter strangers to me, so that I could not feel myself to have much claim upon them. But at fifteen, and only imperfectly educated, what possibility was there of my being able to support myself? And so, as

no amount of pondering on my part could find any other way out of the tangle, I had perforce to yield, and Lady O'Donnell arranged for me that, after remaining at Rathowen for the impending trial, I should go over to my new home in the spring.

CHAPTER III.

A POPULAR HERO.

The winter passed over quietly enough. At first, as the short days darkened in, I was annoyed by the uneasiness Lady O'Donnell displayed if I chanced to linger out in the dusk, but on my saying to her once that I had always been used to range about without any one troubling themselves on my account, she answered, "No one had any object in harming you then, Kate, remember that you have a life in your hands now." So I understood the reason of her fears for me. As the spring came round again, the thought of the ordeal that was before me: of the hour when I and my father's murderer should stand face to face was seldom out of my mind. I knew that, except for a few insignificant bits of circumstantial evidence, the case for the Crown rested entirely on my identification of the prisoner, so that in truth, as Lady O'Donnell had said, I held Kearney's life in my hands. Over and over again I questioned with myself whether there was any, even the remotest shadow of a possibility that I could be mistaken, and again and again the man's face rose before me as I had seen it that night with the moonlight shining on it, as he took aim slowly and deliberately at my father, as I had seen it in the gaol and again in the dock, in clear and overwhelming evidence that I was not.

On the morning of the trial a letter addressed in a mean, almost illegible hand, came by the post for me. It contained a piece of paper torn apparently from a copy book, which was adorned with rude sketches of a blunderbuss, a skull and cross bones and a tombstone, and bore the words:

"Kathrin Kirwan. This is to let you know ther will be blud for blud. As shur as yu swar away Karyn's life you will be a corp suner nor him, and God have marcy on yur soul. Rory."

I showed the document to Dick O'Donnell, who crunched it up angrily in his hand, and flung it into the fire.

"They want to terrify you, and make you break down in your evidence to-day," he said. "Don't give it another thought, Kate, you will be far enough from this enlightened land of ours in another week, and we will keep you safe from the vengeance of all the Whiteboys and the Ribbonmen in Ireland till then." I sighed to myself at the last part of his speech as I went upstairs to get ready.

The market-place at Rosslea, in which the court-house was situated, was filled with an eager, excited crowd, who had failed to gain admission to the building itself, for the trial created no little interest in the locality. There were a few manifestations of hostility as we drove through, but none of any consequence. I had to wait for an hour or more with Lady O'Donnell in the witnesses' room, while the preliminaries of the trial

were gone through, then at last the summons for me came.

The court was thronged as the square outside had been, but there was an intense, hushed silence, as I mounted up into the witness-box. My limbs were trembling under me and my hands shook so that I could hardly hold the Testament when it was handed to me, knowing as I did that the words I had come there to say would in all likelihood be the death warrant of the pale, cowering wretch who faced me in the dock. All the same I answered the questions of the prosecuting counsel clearly and unhesitatingly, and told the court the story of my father's murder, from the moment that the men leaped out on us from behind the gate till he was laid dying in the hall at Kilclaughan, affirming positively that Timothy Kearney, the man who stood opposite to me, was the same who had fired the fatal shot.

After this there followed a long and wearisome cross-examination by the opposing counsel, I was questioned up and down, in and out, on every most trivial detail of that terrible night's work, on many matters, the connection of which with the subject in hand I was unable to understand, but my answers concerning which were brought back to me afterwards in efforts to trip me up in my evidence and make me contradict myself. I have forgotten most of what I was asked, but I know that the point to which the counsel for the prisoner chiefly directed his energies, was to break down my identification of Kearney in the Gaol-yard, and I remember clearly that when, after a series of what seemed to me irrelevant questions, he asked me suddenly whether I would assert on my oath that if I had met Kearney by chance in the street or elsewhere—for that I had gone to the gaol with no idea of what my presence there was required for he wholly declined to believe—I would have recognized him, I answered with an emphasis which startled even myself—

"Yes, among ten thousand!"

The reply manifestly disconcerted him, and after a few more questions I was told I might go down. It was high time, for I was utterly worn out with fatigue, and the intense nervous strain at which I had been kept for hours past. The crowded court, the jury in their box, the red-robed judge, and the contending lawyers were all swimming mistily before my eyes, and I leant heavily on Dick's arm as he led me out.

Seeing how late it was likely to be before my examination was over, the long drive we would have had, and the disturbed state of the country, Lady O'Donnell had decided that we should not return home that evening, but spend the night in the little hotel in the market-place, just opposite the court-house, and there I was accordingly taken.

I did not know at the time, but I know now, that after one or two other witnesses for the prosecution had been examined, the defence produced a number who swore unfalteringly that at the very hour at which I had declared that I had seen Kearney shoot my father on the road he had been at a wake some five miles away. They broke down in several important particulars, as I have heard, and contradicted each other as to the hour he had appeared, the dress he had worn, the time he had remained, and other matters; but to the one point of his having been there at the precise

time at which the murder must have been committed they adhered tenaciously.

Only the judge's charge remained to be delivered when the court adjourned for the night. We had been anxious to get away early the following morning, but what with the ordinary dilatoriness of an Irish country hotel, and the extra strain put on its resources by assize time, it was past noon before the carriage rumbled out of the hotel yard and drew up as near as it could approach to the door. Large as the crowd in the market-place had been on the preceding day, it was as nothing to that which had gathered there now. Looking down from the windows of the hotel one could see nothing but a serried mass of human heads, which extended even some way down the street beyond; all turned towards the court-house in eager impatience to know the issue of the trial, which could not be long delayed now.

Dick and I were at the door of the hotel, waiting for Lady O'Donnell, who had not yet come down, when a sudden wild tumult of voices was heard from within the court-house. It was suppressed almost immediately, and whether it had been of joy or anger one could not tell.

"They have found a verdict," said Dick anxiously. "Whatever way it has gone we ought to be out of this. Get in quickly, Kate; don't let them see you, while I hurry the mother down." And he disappeared, bounding up the stairs three at a time.

I had gone out on the steps to obey his behest, when the doors of the court-house were thrown open, and the close-packed throng within came surging out. There was violent swaying to and fro as they tried to make way for themselves through the throng already gathered there, and in the uproar of voices, questions, answers, oaths, and exclamations all commingled, it was impossible to make out what the result of the trial had been. But in another moment all doubt on the point was put an end to, for Kearney himself emerged from the doorway, exultant triumph on his face and swagger in his gait, as complete a contrast as well could be to the pale, abject wretch I had seen him last. His appearance was the signal for a frantic outburst of joy from the crowd; those standing near him crushed round him to grasp his hand and congratulate him, while the others broke into vociferous cheers, renewed again and again, and each time with more deafening enthusiasm.

I believe that if I had been told of Kearney's acquittal quietly at home it would have come to me with a certain sense of relief, for, guilty or not, I imagine that the knowledge of having by one's own unaided testimony taken away the life of a fellow-creature, must always be a very awful one. But as it was the acclamations of the people—men, women, aye, and little children—cheering, shouting, gesticulating in their delight that the man who they knew, and I knew, had murdered my father had walked out free and scathless among them maddened me. I sprang forward with an uncontrollable cry of anger, and a sudden silence fell on all that tumultuous crowd. Perhaps they had not noticed me before, having no thought for anything save the popular hero; and if they had they might possibly not have shouted as they did. I cannot tell. But now all eyes were turned on me as I stood in my black dress on the top of the steps facing them and facing Kearney, and

carried wholly beyond myself by my fierce resentment, I broke out wildly—

"You know who I am, I am John Kirwan's daughter, daughter of the man you murdered—yes, *you*. Everyone of you here who knew his murder was planned and let him go to his death, who are glad it was done, are as guilty before God as the men who shot him on the road. His blood is on your heads and on your childrens', and I pray to God that He will look upon it and avenge it. I pray that He will take the blessed sunshine and the rain from you, that He will let your crops rot in the ground, that He will send the famine and the fever upon you; and when it has all come upon you, then I shall be *glad*—yes, as glad as you are to-day."

What more I might have gone on to say in my burning indignation I do not know, for at this moment Dick caught my arm, and drew me back forcibly into the hotel. "Stop, Kate, for heaven's sake," he said "you are beside yourself; you don't know what you are saying." And I did not; the violence of my feelings had wholly carried me away, but now that the excitement was ended, I burst into a hysterical and most unheroic fit of crying.

Lady O'Donnell and her son were somewhat frightened as to the ill effects my outbreak might have, but on the contrary, the passionate denunciation by the dead man's child seemed to produce a profound impression on the superstitious minds of the peasantry, and in silence they allowed us to pass out through their midst.

A week later I stood on the deck of the steamer at Dublin. "Remember, Kate," Lady O'Donnell, who had brought me so far on my journey, said, as she bade me farewell, "while Dick and I are to the fore you will never be without friends." I strained my eyes to watch her as we slowly dropped down the river, till her figure was an indistinguishable speck on the wharf, and then I felt indeed that I was alone in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

LONDON.

I NEED not say much of the years I spent in London, they were not happy ones, perhaps they hardly could have been. I suppose, under the circumstances, my sister-in-law would have required a truly great nature to have been able to receive me, coming a penniless dependant, into her household with no feelings but those of love and charity—and Harriet had not a great nature. All that the O'Donnells had spared me the knowledge of I had to learn here in its naked, unvarnished truth. Of the shameful extravagance and waste at Kilcaughan which had brought matters to their present pass, of the starveling, Irish pride, to gratify which appearances must be kept up, no matter what the cost in the future might be. Once only, it is true, did she launch out into open reproaches of my dead father, and then it called forth so fierce an outburst of anger from me, that she never ventured on doing so again, but contented herself instead with taunts and covert inuendoes, which were none the less

galling that they could not easily be replied to. I remember that my bitterest regret through it all was that I had been so young at the time of my father's murder, that I could not take any of the blame on myself and say, "I should have managed better, I should have looked after things and economized, the fault was mine, not his," but had to leave his memory, the memory of my genial, loving, if too carelessly lavish father, undefended.

Nugent, my brother, was fairly kind to me, but of him I did not see much, as he did not bestow a large amount of his company on the home circle, and it had besides been arranged on my first coming over that my habitation was to be in the childrens' rooms, and I was only to appear downstairs when specially invited. It was well for me that there were children in the house, for the minds of little children—God bless them—cannot take in the hard distinctions of wealth and class that the world makes for itself. It was nothing to them that I was poor, I was their dear Aunt Kate, who could tell funnier stories and invent better games than any one else; they loved me with all their little might, and I—perhaps because of the need there is in most human hearts for something to love—I loved them, and in teaching and tending them I was fairly content, while I felt with inward gratification that by doing so I was not quite the burden my sister-in-law strove to represent me. All the while, as well as my unaided efforts could accomplish it, I strove to carry on my own education from the point where the assassin's bullet had ended it so abruptly, and fit myself, as soon as I should have attained woman's estate, to earn my own livelihood as a governess—that one refuge of distressed gentility.

A couple of years went over thus—they seemed a weary while in passing, but they were gone at last—and I said joyously to myself that the time was very near now when I should be free from thralldom and able to shape my life for myself. With this in view I studied the advertisements in the *Times* daily, in search of a proffered situation, where the qualifications demanded were such as I might reasonably consider myself to possess. I had even answered one or two such, but hitherto without success, when I received a message one morning that a gentleman wished to see me. Expecting to find myself in the presence of a possible employer, I assumed an air of self-confidence as I could command, though my heart beat somewhat more vehemently than usual as I proceeded to the drawing-room. On opening the door, however, I was greeted by a glad exclamation of welcome, and the next moment found both my hands caught and held fast by none other than Sir Richard O'Donnell.

"Dick, who would have dreamt of your being over here!" I cried in joyful surprise.

"It wasn't pleasure that brought me," he answered, stepping back a pace or two to survey me from head to foot. "Why, Kate, how tall you've got; you're a grown woman now."

"Time I was, I think. Do you forget that I'm eighteen?" I said, drawing myself up to my full height; and I noted, though I did not say so, that he too had lost the bright, boyish expression he used to have, and grown older and graver-looking than the couple of years that had passed over since I saw him last seemed to warrant. "And

is Lady O'Donnell come over with you? It would be delightful to have you both here."

But Dick shook his head. "No, I have come over here with one or two other men to see what we can get done over here to help us."

"To help you—what for?" I asked in some astonishment.

Dick stared at me. "Why, Kate, surely you know what has happened?"

"No; what is it?" I cried, breathlessly, thinking of some misfortune to his mother or himself.

"*The potato crop has failed,*" was all he said, but it was quite enough.

Leading the secluded life I did, chiefly in the nursery with the children, it was the first I had heard of it; but I had lived too long in Ireland not to know the full and appalling meaning of his words.

"But not entirely—not altogether, Dick?" I cried.

"Utterly and entirely," he answered, "the food of the people is lying black and rotten in the fields. There has been a threatening of it these two years past, and they have been bad enough; but when I think of what this winter that is before us will be, I own that my heart sinks within me. There, Kate, tell me something of yourself now, and how you have liked living in London."

"Not as well as living in Ireland," I answered, evasively, "but it was not to be expected I should. I shall probably not be here much longer, however, my brother is not too well off that I should be a burden on him longer than is absolutely necessary, and I am old enough now to earn my own independence."

Dick hesitated for a moment or two, and then said diffidently, "Kate, I came here with the intention of making a request of you, rather an unwarrantable one I am afraid. My mother has not been in very strong health latterly, and this winter there must of necessity be an amount of work thrown upon her which she is quite unequal to. She has no daughter, you know, no other relation to come to her help, and so I thought—that is—"

"You thought I might go over, and do what I can to help. Willingly, gladly, Dick, you might have known that without asking me."

"But Mr. and Mrs. Kirwan may object to the arrangement," he said.

"Mr. and Mrs. Kirwan are not the least likely to object to any arrangement that takes me off their hands," I rejoined.

And you must think it over yourself before you decide," he urged. "You can have formed no idea yet of all you would have to face if you were to come to Rathowen. You are so young, Kate; I feel it is not fair of us toadden your life by bringing you into all this misery."

"I have had more than that toadden me," I said; "and do you not think, Dick, that I am rejoiced to be able to be of some little service to your mother in return for all she did for me in my trouble three years ago?"

And thus it came to pass that, what I had thought would be my start out into the world, was to me a journey homewards.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAMINE YEAR.

ABLER pens than mine have told the story of that black winter of '47, but I think that even the most graphic description cannot bring home its full horrors to the minds of those who did not experience them for themselves. Only those who lived through them can know what these awful times were, when famine and pestilence slew their scores of thousands, and the "sliding coffin" carried forth its unnumbered dead to the great pit dug for their reception.

Each morning Lady O'Donnell and I doled out a cauldron of soup, or rather stirabout, to the clamorous multitude that gathered for it, and more than once it happened that when the yard gates were opened to let the famishing throng in, one amongst them kept upright till then, by the pressure of the others around, fell dying to the ground. But of all the terrible sights I witnessed then nothing was so awful to me as the utter loosening of all human ties and affections under the grim stress of the famine. I have seen fathers snatch the food from their starving children, sons from their aged fathers, little children fighting like wild beasts for a crust of bread. One bond alone stood firm through it all. I have seen, too, a dying woman struggling fiercely with her last energies for even a handful of food, that she might thrust it into the mouths of her little ones, not tasting thereof herself, because of the mother's love which is mightier, yea, than the hunger-death.

The winter wore through at last, but though the spring brought back the sunshine and increasing warmth, it brought no lightening of the bitter destitution. On the contrary, the distress rather deepened, as those who had a small store of money or food from the preceding harvest came to the end of it, and like the rest had only public alms between them and death.

One afternoon Lady O'Donnell came into the little room that had been given up to me as a study or office, where I was on my knees packing up a consignment of stockings and woollen jackets knit by the women, to be despatched to one of the societies organized in England, to find sale for their handiwork.

"I will finish that for you, Kate," she said, "I want you to go as far as Nappy Donnelly's. Her last son died a week ago, and there are only she and the grandchild left. Neither of them have been here for the last two mornings, and I am afraid they may not have the strength to come so far. You had better bring them some bread and meal."

It was a lovely afternoon as I set out upon my walk, and sad and sick at heart as I was, with all the misery about me, I could not but feel the cheering influence of the gladsome sunshine and balmy spring air. The dwelling I was bound for was a wretched cabin standing at the end of a "boreen" or lane, some distance off the main road. I could see that the door was open as I approached, but there was no turf smoke curling up from the chimney nor any other sign of life, and a horrid fear came over me that—as had happened to me once before on a similar errand—I should come in upon a ghastly scene, and find that those I had

come to help were beyond both human suffering and human aid. But as I came nearer still, crossing by stepping-stones a pool of stagnant filth in front of the door, I heard a low wailing from within, which told me that this time I was not too late. I looked in; on a heap of straw and rags in one corner lay a child, or what, from its size, I knew to be such, for there was nothing else childlike in its sunken, sharp-featured face, and lean limbs showing through the tattered covering, while an old crone, shrunken to the merest skin and bone, sat on a stool by the ashes on the hearth, rocking herself to and fro and uttering the wail I had heard.

She turned round at my entrance and gave a kind of cry, while both of her eyes and those of the child fasted themselves on the basket in my hand with a wolfish expression that was terrible to see. In silence I took out some of the bread I had brought, and gave it to them. The old woman snatched the piece from me, gnawing it ravenously, but though the child stretched out its skeleton hand eagerly, its strength failed it to eat the dry morsel. I moistened a little of it in some water, and then it devoured it greedily. The old woman meanwhile, once her hunger had been to some extent appeased, had resumed her rocking and her monotonous wail for her "four fine sons, her four fine sons, ohone, ohone!"

It was strange, indeed, that she and the feeble child should have outlived them, but it was by no means the only instance when I saw the strong stricken down first and the old and sickly clinging on tenaciously to life; and it was evident to me that here it would be but a little span which would separate these that remained from those that were already gone.

Having carried in a supply of turf from the remains of the stack outside, and promised to come back next day with more food, I was about to leave the cabin when I heard a step outside, and looking out through the open door I saw a gaunt famine-stricken man come staggering slowly up the boreen.

"A bit t'ait, for the love ov the Great God," he cried.

I turned to the ricketty table where I had set my basket down; but the old woman with an activity I could not have believed her capable of was before me, and snatching it up, she hugged it fiercely to her breast.

"Go yer ways, go yer ways," she cried. "Is it us, as hasn't bit nor sup to put into our mouths to be givin' to every wan passin' the road. Bid him go to thim he come from, Miss Kate, sorra taste we have to spare."

It was only by exerting all my authority that I prevailed upon her reluctantly to yield me up a small piece of bread for the starving man, but as I turned to give it to him she sprung forward with a menacing cry.

"Arrah, bad luck to ye, is it you that's to be takin' the bit from the widdy an' the orphan child? Don't ye touch him, Miss Kate, jewel, don't go next nor nigh him, ye know him sure, the villain that he is."

I looked at him again, and haggard and famished as he was; with death stamped upon his face I knew him—Kearney, the man who had shot my father.

I drew my hand back with a shudder I could

not repress. "You must give it to him, Nappy, you must when I tell you, I cannot."

But Kearney made no attempt to take the dole grudgingly held out to him; his eyes had fixed themselves on me, as with a horrid sort of fascination.

"It's yerself," he said slowly, "Yu as said the curse of God wud be on us for the murther, an' ye'd be glad whin ye'd see it come. Faith an' ye may be glad this day."

As he spoke he suddenly took a step forward, stretched his hands out blindly for support, and failing to reach any he fell heavily on the earthen floor.

Till that moment I had believed that if there was one feeling stronger in my heart than another, it was deadly hatred of this man; but when I saw him lying prone at my feet, I forgot it as if it had never been, in the irresistible impulse to succour a dying fellow-creature. Old Nappy Donnelly had shrunk back to the further end of the cabin, mumbling volubly in Irish to herself; no aid was to be expected from her.

I knelt beside Kearney; his face was livid and working convulsively, while his breath came heavily and with difficulty. Hoping to ease him somewhat, I passed my arm beneath him, raising his head, while I called frantically to the old woman to fetch me a little water. But it was too late; Kearney looked up in my face, muttered half inaudibly, "Kirwan's child." And with his head upon my shoulder, my father's murderer died.

I laid him back gently on the floor, and at that moment I heard, with a relief I cannot describe, voices on the road. A party of men were returning along it from some of the public works started by Government in all the famine districts, and riding slowly beside them, talking to them, was Sir Richard himself. I went out before the door and beckoned to him. Turning into the boreen he came full speed up to me.

"Well, Kate, what is it? Why, how white you are!"

Briefly, and not very coherently, I told him what had happened.

"I will have all that is needful done," he said. By a shout he recalled the men, who had gone on along the road, and went into the miserable dwelling with them, to have the poor mortal remains carried out, and laid in a ruinous cowshed beside the house till arrangements could be made for the burial. I could not bring myself to go back into the cabin, but proceeded slowly homewards, feeling dizzy and faint now that it was all over, and I had leisure to think in what had happened.

I had passed through the gates of Rathowen, and was walking up the avenue before Dick overtook me. He dismounted, throwing the reins on the neck of his horse, which he had trained to follow tamely like a dog at his heels, and walked by my side.

"You knew who that man was, Kate?" I nodded. "It was a strange chance, or what we are pleased to call chance, that you of all people on earth should have been with him when he died. Do you remember that day in Rosslea, three years ago, when the people shouted for him after the trial, and what you said then?"

"Am I ever likely to forget it," I returned, vehemently. "I have never seen any wretched starv-

ing creature all this winter through but it comes back to me, that is what I wanted, what I prayed to have."

Dick looked at me in surprise. "But your words did not bring the famine. You surely do not imagine that."

"No, of course not; but when I see all the hunger and the misery, I hate to know that it is only what I wished might come to revenge papa, and I wished it with all my heart, Dick, when I said it, and for many a day afterwards."

"It was no wonder that you did, all things considered," he returned.

"And at least it has not made me glad, as I said it would."

We walked on in silence for a time, the sun was setting behind the range of low hills that swelled up against the horizon, its last level rays shining on us through a clump of larches that were just breaking out into their vivid, spring green; a blackbird in the branches overhead was carolling lustily, and from across a field came the two-syllabled note of the cuckoo.

"It was just here I turned back and saw you watching us that night when papa and I drove away," I said, as we came in sight of the old grey house, half-hidden by the tall trees that clustered round it.

"I recollect," Dick said. "I knew your father's life was threatened, and I was horribly uneasy at your driving home like that so late, without even a servant with you. But he was so fearless, there was no getting him to believe in danger. All your associations with Rathowen are sad ones, Kate," he went on after a moment or two, "it has always been trouble of some sort that has brought you to us."

I tried to put him off lightly. "Is it not well for me to have so good a shelter to come to?"

"It was not trouble of your own that brought you here this time," he reminded me. "I don't know what we should have done without you here this winter; you have done more work than any two of us. We have gone through some bad times together, Kate, you and I, but when the good ones come again, shall we not share them too as we have done the evil ones?"

He had taken my hand as he spoke; there was no mistaking his meaning; it was indeed what, half-shamedly at first, but with a new, great gladness I had hoped—trusted more and more confidently—would come someday. Yet this evening, when the happiness I had looked for was put within my grasp, I was too downhearted, too depressed with that scene of half an hour ago to reach out my hand and take it.

"Let us wait for the good times first," I said, "they seem a weary while off just now."

"Why should we?" he returned. "This would be no season for junketing and festivity, I grant you, but if you care for me, Kate, and I have thought of late you did—you must know, you must have seen how I love you—what is to hinder us from going down quietly to the church some day—any day—and being married there. The good times will come again, just as surely as the sun that's setting over there will rise to-morrow, no matter how dark the night may be; but shall we not wait for them more patiently, more contentedly, when we know that whatever the future brings us, at least it cannot take us from each other."

It was a long speech for Dick to make, for he was not usually given to many words, but he had held my hand through it all, nor did I withdraw it when he had ended. And so in the soft light of the summer sunset we made our pact for life. Nigh upon forty years ago we made it, but still we walk side by side, up hill and down, through storm and shine, towards that peace which all things find upon their journey's end.

THE DEATH OF SUMMER.

Not on a quiet bed doth Summer die,
But fierce October with his wild chill breath

 Her sad doom saith.
And one by one her children fading lie,
While rain drifts o'er them silent, ceaselessly,
 And moans of death.

Poor Summer! with her painted, thin, soft dress,
Strives hard to hold her ragged garb around,

 Yet 'tis unwound
By every breeze; her fading loveliness
Gleams sweeter as it dies; each wayward tress
 Trails on the ground.

Oh, get thee hence, gay lady, thou wert sweet
But in thy prime; thou canst not bear the rain
 That soft doth plain;

Telling of winter-tide when storms do greet
The parchèd earth, and winds unceasing beat
 The window pane.

Give sturdy Winter thy small withered hand,
And let him press thy lips; his arms are cold,
 And now enfold

Thy frail worn figure that doth shivering stand
Upon the borders of that unknown land
 Where all is told.

Ah! take thy rest, sweet Summer; take thy rest!
Thou shalt return once more, I say, to earth;

 I know thy worth.
Yet, oh, I sicken of thy rose-decked breast,
Where 'neath thy beating heart all soft caressed,
 Love had its birth.

Ah, me! she's dead; cover her lovely eyes,
And fold her hands, where struck keen winter's dart.

 Let us depart
She was our holiday, 'neath winter skies
Lies now our work. Each year a summer dies!
 Each day a heart!

J. E. PANTON.

OUR PONIES.

BY ALICE KING.

Up the lane which the autumn storms have turned into a perfect river of liquid red mud they come splashing; over the spongy moorland and the elastic purple heather they come cantering; down the broad highway they come with their little hoofs ringing on the frost-hardened road. They are prancing, they are kicking, they are tossing aloft shaggy manes and whisking long tails, they are thrusting velvet muzzles on to our shoulder; some glance at us shyly with large, expressive eyes full of meaning; some neigh in

tones of important self-assurance, some arch their long necks conceitedly ; we have lived for many years in a hill-country region where a pony is as much a necessary institution as a canoe in the South Sea Islands, or a mule in the Pyrenees, or a camel in the desert, so no wonder a goodly troop gathers round us when we speak the words, "our ponies."

First of all trots up with a wondrously consequential air, as though he was sixteen hands high at least instead of eleven, a little old white pony, with a back broad enough, in spite of his small size, for all the moorland fairies to dance a quadrille on. He may well have a lofty majestical air, and carry himself like charger at a review, for he was the riding-master of the whole family, both boys and girls, and gave his lessons in a style which, if somewhat novel and not exactly that of a fashionable riding-school, was most thoroughly and emphatically a style to the purpose.

Quilp, such was the name given him on account of his resemblance, both in crankiness of temper and strength of limb and frame, to his namesake in fiction, knew precisely the treatment required by each of his pupils to make him or her turn out an accomplished horse-man or horse-woman, and behaved himself accordingly. He would be as gentle with the little girls and their nurse as if they were their own dolls, while with the boys he was as full of rough play as they were with their balls and marbles. He had, however, a code of laws which he would suffer neither young ladies nor young gentlemen to break with impunity. If they ventured to touch with the whip his sacred quarters, he would stand still and kick with a will which quickly deposited them on the ground ignominiously at his feet, and when they were thus summarily disposed of, he would never fail to complete the lesson of obedience by snuffing at them contemptuously before he permitted them to rise. He would never go beyond a certain distance on special roads, but would plant his fore-feet firmly and turn himself, for the time being, into a stone steed on a knight's monument. He always walked with a swagger, as though he was in a state procession, and shook his head with an air of most bland, superior wisdom, if one of his young riders ever presumed to do anything which he regarded as foolish or unbecoming.

Quilp had in everything the most horse-like proclivities, small pony though he was. He was the most thorough little hunter that ever wore a horse-shoe. The instant he caught the distant chime of horn and hound, up went his ears like fairy standards; he drew himself together as though he wanted to emulate the dog in the eastern story, who was found in a nut-shell, while he stepped proudly and daintily along, as if he imagined he had a triumphant carpet spread beneath his feet; only his strict sense of duty prevented his bearing his young charges into the full midst of the chase. In his old age he was never so delighted as when one of his former pupils, now grown so tall, that he could comfortably pick up his whip from the ground, if he dropped it, without dismounting from Quilp's back, would ride him to the meet, and let him see a little of the sport in a quiet way. He died at the patriarchal age of thirty, watched over and tended to the last by the children; by that time grown men and

women, of whose early days he had been one of the chief companions.

A pony of a very different stamp from Quilp, yet endowed with quite as much peculiar character of her own was "Colly." She was a black pony-mare, who owed her name to her colour, "Colly" being the word in the west country for a black-bird. She was a strongly-built animal, a regular little weight-carrier for her size; yet, notwithstanding her depth of girth and sturdy proportions, she had the tiniest of Exmoor heads, and her soft muzzle would have gone into a tea-cup. Her ears were very fine and delicate, and so mobile and full of expression, that they seemed to be perpetually engaged in silent, pantomimic talk about everything she saw as she went along. Her eyes were very large and brilliant, and capable of the most varied meaning from wildness to gentle affection; they were eyes which would have done honour to a gipsy queen.

Colly was a pony of strange whims and capricious fancies, and shy, eccentric ways; it appeared as if the most tricky elves of the moorland, on which her youth was spent, must have had a great deal to do with her education. She started at every flutter of a leaf, at every stir in the grass; her eyes were always glancing about watchfully, as if she feared the neighbourhood of some hidden danger; she examined suspiciously every gateway, as though she dreaded an apparition there, and feared a phantom face might look out through it at her; the faintest sound would make her spring backward like an elastic ball. She had an especial horror and dislike of ugly old women, perhaps because her Exmoor training had taught her an orthodox West country fear of witches, and if she met one in a narrow lane she would turn and fly at her utmost speed; she would never, if she could help it, walk through the mud, her Exmoor experiences having given her a great and wholesome dread of bogs, and she regarded all soft ground as such; she would, therefore, pick her way from stone to stone as carefully as a fine lady who fears to soil her silk stockings, and would always walk on the edge of a rut rather than in the middle of it, a proceeding which was more exciting than comfortable for her rider. It was impossible to tell what might arouse her alarm or to what she might take exception as she went along. A white stone, a flickering shadow, a glimmer of water, any of these things might awaken her mistrust and make her commence a series of strange, wriggling movements, which are just as difficult to describe on paper as they were to sit in painful reality.

Yet, remarkable to relate, Colly, with all her skittish ways and whims, and all her unaccountable freaks, was ridden, for many years, by a blind mistress over hill-country paths and tracks, which would try the nerves probably of a brave horse-woman, with both her eyes shining bright in her head, who had been used to Rotten Row or the grass fields of the midland counties. Colly knew her mistress full as well as her mistress knew her, and her expressive pony face would grow gentle and confiding the moment that she saw her come out, and understood that she and no other was to mount her to-day. The pair would exchange a few affectionate salutations, and then Colly would take the whole responsibility of everything upon herself, and would carry her mistress, as safely

and easily as if she had been sitting in her arm-chair at home, down hill-side tracks that were nothing but a cataract of small, rolling stones, up lanes that were like perpetually going upstairs under extreme difficulties, and along rocky ledges which were as slippery as December ice all the year round.

Bobbie and Sallie were two ponies that were successively ridden by the same mistress, but they formed a ridiculous contrast in character and disposition. Sallie was one of the prettiest, most sweet-tempered, light-hearted ponies that ever cantered across a meadow, in her whole composition she had not a speck of vice, or so much as the shadow of a naughty trick. If she pranced and curvetted, as she would do at times, it was all done in the sheer merriness and gladness of her heart, because, like a young beauty, she did not seem to be able, now and then, to restrain her feet from dancing, and her slender neck from arching, and her perfect shape from setting itself up proudly. She was as gay as a sunbeam and yet as gentle as a summer breeze; a touch or a word could rule and guide her.

Bobbie, on the contrary, was a pony of extraordinary moods, and unexpected, prickly fancies. When he came to the door for his mistress to mount, it was utterly impossible to tell how he might carry her; it would all depend on the frame of mind his lordship was in. If he was amiably disposed, no pony could go better up or down hill, over turf or heather; but if the reverse, woe to his rider, if he or she was not very careful in what they were about. When Bobbie was in one of his states of sulks, he would allow no one whilst on his back to blow his nose; he resented it, for some unknown reason, as a grave personal insult; if his rider laughed loudly he took occasion to show his displeasure; if the smallest unusual movement was made by the foot or hand, the result for the offender was very likely to be, if he were not sitting very firmly in his saddle, a sudden flight over Bobbie's head. When Bobbie was in a gracious mood he put himself into first-rate form, and carried his head as if he had a vast idea of his own importance; but when he was the contrary, he held his tail on one side like the tail of a badly-made wooden horse sold at a fair, and endeavoured to appear as disreputable a member of society as possible. There was never any accounting for his varied tempers; the only way was to take them as they came, and make the best of them; his rider gained a useful lesson in the graces of patience and meekness, if nothing else.

A sisterly group of three next come cantering up to us, asking for friendly notice; two were sisters in blood, the other in affection, yet the bond was not the less strong for that. Irene and Hebe both had, on one side of their pedigree, some of the best blood in England in their veins, while their mother was of purest Exmoor descent. Their appearance, as well as their dispositions, gave indication of their double and widely different origin. They were fully a size bigger than most of our ponies, and the development of all their limbs and muscles, as well as their long stride, was horse-like; but their small heads, and mobile ears, and large, expressive eyes were most authentic letters patent of highest Exmoor nobility. The mixture of horse and pony in them would some-

times lead to the most comical results in their behaviour. Hebe, for instance, had in her nature a large spice of the suspicious shyness peculiar to Exmoor ponies in general; the horse side, however, of her family instinctively forbade her doing anything so undignified as to indulge in the eccentric, skittish wriggles of a terrified Exmoor. Her plan, therefore, was, when she saw anything that frightened her, to walk deliberately backward with a slow and stately step, which was like nothing so much as the figure of a minuet danced by a lady of the olden time. All the while she was performing this *pas seul*, her large eyes were opened to their widest extent in a state of mingled terror and wonder, and her ears were making signals of fear with a rapidity which outdid the telegraphic wire itself.

Dame Durden, the third of the trio, was inferior to the two sisters in beauty, but possessed a decided superiority in intellect; the consequence was that she exercised the universal influence of a sovereign mind over them. They were her most servile imitators in everything, and copied with minute fidelity all her doings. If she kicked, they kicked, if she galloped, they galloped, if she stopped, they stopped; they evidently regarded her as the very glass of fashion and manners. Fortunately Dame Durden was a dame of staid and stately ways, who always led the brigade of ponies, and led them with the majestic step of a Grecian matron in a tragic chorus in every ride across the heather, and thus she did not seduce the two foolish beauties into any great excesses of ill conduct.

Our pony chronicle could be drawn out to a yet greater length than that of "our dogs," but if we were to follow the whole troop which come hurrying past us, our ride would be a yet longer one than that of Mazeppa.

IN MEMORIAM: SHAFTESBURY.

BY COULSON KERNANAH, F.R.G.S.

I SEE men standing in the world's wide places,
Who strive to climb the giddy heights of Fame,
That they may write upon her starry spaces
The memory of their name.

And on each breast, in burning words recorded,
I read the motive-purpose of their strife:
"A woman's love," some seek to have awarded—
"Rank," or "Immortal Life."

But as, with eager eye, I watch them tracing
The tremulous line—as though 'twere writ in sand—
The record dulls, blurred by Time's all-effacing,
And stern, relentless hand.

And one I see, though high-born, sadly turning
From 'midst the tumult: "For the Master's sake,"
In simple letters, plainly writ, is burning
On brow and breast. I take

No further heed of those who beat and battle,
Who strive and strain to win fair Fame's
reward;
I see him follow 'mid the roar and rattle
The footsteps of his Lord;

Undreaming all that in God's heaven above him
His name is writ in lines of deathless fame—
The widow's tears, the prayers of those who love
him—
The blind, the sick, the lame.

Till last he halts before a lowly dwelling,
Where hunger, want, and sickness late have
trod;
Thongh 'bove the door I see a scroll that's telling
"Tis "To the HEART OF GOD."

But he reads not the motto graven o'er it,
He seeks the poor, the sick, the blind, the
dumb;
The door is opened as he stands before it,
And ONE, thorn-crowned, says, "Come!"

GRAVE GOSSIP.

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.I.S.

CHARITIES associated with graves are somewhat numerous in this country. It doubtless occurred to many persons that if they left money and other gifts to be distributed over their remains that it would cause their names to be gratefully remembered. A few particulars about some of these remarkable bequests can hardly fail to interest our readers. The first three belong to Yorkshire. John Smith, of Acklam, in the East Riding, who died in 1681, left by his will two pounds per annum to the poor of the parish to be paid on his tombstone; one pound was to be paid on St. John the Baptist Day and the other on St. John the Evangelist Day. William Robinson, a notable Hull gentleman, who held the office of sheriff of the town in 1682, and died on October 8th, 1708, bequeathed a dozen loaves of bread, valued at one shilling each, to be given to a dozen poor widows, to be delivered at his grave-side every Christmas Day. In St. Cuthbert's Churchyard, Kildale, a tombstone bears the following inscription: "Here lyeth the body of Joseph Dunn, who dyed ye 10th day of March, 1716, aged 82 years. He left to ye poor of Kildale, xxs., of Commandale, xxs., of Danby xxs., of Westerdale xs., to be paid upon his gravestone by equal portions, on ye 1st of May and ye 11th of November for ever."

A provision was made in 1611 by Leonard Dare for the poor of South Pool to receive a supply of bread. He left money for the churchwardens of the parish of South Pool on Christmas Day, Lady Day, and Michaelmas Day, to buy, bring, and lay on his tombstone threescore penny loaves of good and wholesome bread, made of wheat, and then distribute the same to the poor of the parish. About five centuries ago a lady left a bequest to be given away in a singular manner. On Good Friday, annually, the Vicar of St. Bartholomew's the Great, Smithfield, drops in a row twenty-one six-pences on the lady's grave. The coins are picked

up by the same number of widows kneeling, having previously attended the church, where a sermon is preached. Another Good Friday custom is still kept up, of which the following are the details. Peter Symonds, by his will dated 1586, left a sum of money for a sermon to be preached in the parish church of All Hallows, Lombard Street, London, and at the close of the service sixty scholars of Christ's Hospital are to be presented with "a bunch of raisins and a bright penny." He also left property for the purchase of sixty loaves of bread to be given on Whit-Sunday to poor persons on his grave in Liverpool Street. The site of his tomb is now covered by a railway terminus, and the distribution is made in front of the schoolroom in Bishopsgate Church-yard. A singular manner of distributing a charity existed for an extended period at Paddington. A paper entitled *The News*, of December 23, 1821, gives the following account of it: "This morning at eight o'clock, according to the annual custom, a quantity of bread and cheese will be thrown from the belfry at Paddington Church among the populace. The assemblage on this occasion is generally immense, and a great scramble takes place. The custom, which has long been observed on Sunday before Christmas Day, had its origin, we are told, in the will of two sisters (paupers), who, travelling to London to claim an estate, in which they succeeded, and being much distressed, they were first relieved in Paddington."

We have found a notice of paying rent on a tombstone. Pennant places on record that when he visited Carlisle Cathedral in 1772, it was the practice of the tenants of the Dean and Chapter, who occupied their farms and tenements by certain peculiar tenures, to pay their rent on an altar tomb, known as the "blue stone," which stood in the west end of the cathedral.

The sum of seven shillings a year was left to seven old maids of Glenthorn, Lincolnshire, on condition that they washed a tomb in the church known as "Molly Grime" every Good Friday with water brought from Newell Well. About 1832 the owner of the estate out of which the yearly rent charge was paid failed, and his property was sold without any reservation for the payment of the fee for cleaning the figure of Molly Grime, and thus ended the old ceremony.

Many bequests have been made for dressing graves with flowers. At Grateley, Hampshire, under the will of William Benson Earle, the parish clerk is entitled to a guinea per year, on condition that he keeps in order the bed of flowers over the grave of Dame Johanna Elton. Edward Rose, in his will dated 18th December, 1652, left a sum of money for rose trees to be planted over his burial place, and for fresh trees to be set in place of those that decayed.

We gather from a Cornish newspaper of July, 1866, the following: "A curious behest of an eccentric man has been obeyed within the last few days, at St. Ives. Mr. John Knill—first an attorney, then steward at St. Ives for the Duke of Buckingham, next collector of customs at that place, and finally a bencher at Gray's Inn—who built the pyramidal monument which overlooks St. Ives, left a sum of money, the interest of which was to be given to ten young maidens who were to dance round his monument. In the centre is a hollow, destined for Mr. Knill's

remains, but he was buried in St. Andrew's Church, Holborn, London. A week or two since the trustees found ten damsels, ten years old, witnessed the dance, and paid the girls ten shillings each for adherence to Mr. Knill's peculiar wish." It is stated in the register of Lymington Church, under the year 1736, "Samuel Baldwin, Esq., a sojourner in this parish, was *immersed* without the Needles, *sans ceremonie*, May 20." The Needles are a series of well-known rocks jutting out at sea from the Isle of Wight. We are told that the ceremony was performed in consequence of an earnest wish the deceased had expressed a little before his dissolution, in order to disappoint the intention of his wife, who had repeatedly threatened in their domestic squabbles (which were frequent) that, if she survived him, she would avenge her conjugal suffering by dancing on his grave. These are only a few of the many romantic facts associated with the grave displaying charity, love and malice.

MR. MILWATER'S PERFIDY.

BY HORACE VICKARS REES.

CHAPTER L

MRS. MILWATER SPEAKS HER MIND.

"I TELL you, Mr. Milwater, I insist upon it," said Mrs. Milwater in her most determined tone of voice.

Mr. Milwater looked as if he would like to ejaculate a contemptuous "Pooh!" But the possible consequences of such an act of temerity on his part seemed to be too fearful to incur. So he merely answered his better half in a mildly protesting manner—

"But my dear, consider the gravity—"

It was Mrs. Milwater's turn to look as if she would like to say "Pooh!" But the good lady did not stop there. She said "Pooh!" with all the contempt at her command, the which, particularly in her intercourse with Mr. Milwater, was considerable.

"I have no patience with you, Milwater."

"Very true, my love," murmured that unhappy gentleman, "I—I don't particularly remember that you ever had."

This was the topmost height of Mr. Milwater's expostulative capacity, but it made no impression upon his worthy and loud-voiced spouse, who repeated—

"I say it again, Milwater, I have no patience with you when you talk about the gravity of discharging one of your clerks. Why, if I were to put my bonnet on I could send the whole ware-houseful of them about their business in half an hour and fill their places in the next ten minutes!"

"I daresay you could, Maria, I haven't the slightest doubt on the subject, but I beg that you will not attempt to effect any such, such—I may say, wholesale clearance," said Mr. Milwater helplessly, feeling no doubt that he had quite enough of Mrs. Milwater in his house, without seeing anything of her in his office.

"Well, unless you send that man away, I shall come down and do it for you," said Mrs. Milwater decisively; "there now!"

There seems to be a wonderful conviction in the feminine mind of the comprehensive conclusiveness of "There now!" Further argument on the part of the male creature after that appalling phrase has been uttered is simply futile.

And Mr. Milwater saw that the fiat had gone forth and that he must collapse, as he usually did, under his wife's cheerful influence.

"Well, Maria, if it must be, it must be," he said dolorously, "but I really cannot help thinking that you are a little harsh with poor Dolling. The old man has been with me for twenty years, and twenty years is a long time, my dear, a very long time."

"Yes," retorted Mrs. Milwater, "a great deal too long. And whose money has paid him, all that time? I should like you to tell me that, Mr. Milwater." And the good lady glared triumphantly at her unfortunate spouse.

"Well—our money, I suppose," said Mr. Milwater timorously, as if he were not quite certain on the point. "Part of the expenses of the business, like all the others, you know."

"Yes, I do know. And whose money made the business and put you in the position that you are, Mr. Milwater?" pursued his Nemesis. "Answer me that question."

"I—I really don't know, Maria," said Mr. Milwater in wild desperation. "I'm late for the City already and—I think we have discussed this question before without any satisfactory result."

"Yes, you may well say that, Milwater. It suits your mean nature to evade the question. But I'll answer it for you, sir, I'll answer it for you. I'm not ashamed to let the whole world know it. It was the twelve thousand, three hundred and seventy-five pounds which my sainted great-uncle left me and which I brought you, every penny of it, that made the business, and made you too. My money, Mr. Milwater, that's the answer you shirk with your usual base ingratitude. And it would be very hard if I could have no voice in the spending of it. Twelve thousand, three hundred and seventy-five pounds, Mr. Milwater, that's what I brought you!"

Mr. Milwater could not help thinking that his robust spouse was tolerably dear at the price, but he kept his thoughts wrapped up behind a bland look of conciliation. He had heard all about Mrs. Milwater's twelve thousand three hundred and seventy-five pounds every day of his life for the last five-and-twenty years so that he felt that a few more repetitions of the oft-told story did not matter very much.

"Well, my dear, it may be so—"

"May be so, Mr. Milwater! I tell you it is so," said his wife, with a decisive stamp of her foot.

"Well, it is so, then," said Milwater. "But I dare say that Frank is much to blame in this matter, and it is very harsh to—to make Dolling suffer for Frank's imprudence."

"Frank is not to blame in the matter," said Mrs. Milwater, energetically. "My poor, innocent boy has been a tool in the hands of this designing old wretch and his artful daughter. A perfect lamb amongst the—the—sheep; I mean, the wolves, or the goats, or whatever they are. I see it all, perfectly."

The "perfect lamb" was four and twenty years of age, six feet in his boots, and was looked upon as a very smart young man of business in his father's warehouse, but Mrs. Milwater had her own views on the situation.

"I have brought my children up," continued the worthy lady, speaking as if they were her own exclusive property, and in that British-matron tone of voice which seems to imply a life-long sacrifice at the shrine of babies to the exclusion of all the allurements under the sun—"I have brought my children up to fill in a becoming manner that station in life unto which it has pleased Providence to call them, which in our case is wholesale drysalting. And I am sure that they will not disgrace their education. And Frank ought to make a splendid marriage. There are the Stuble girls, the pickle people, and Miss Woffer, the canned provision brokers, and Mary Mincing, the tea merchants, and a host of other girls ready to rush at him. And here I find he's spending his evenings with this wretched clerk of yours at the man's horrid cottage at Clapham, and the decoy duck of course is the designing daughter of whom I hear: the audacity of the thing quite makes me tremble.

"I am getting very nervous, Milwater," pursued the fragile blossom, who turned the scale at fifteen stone, in a pathetic tone of voice, "and I cannot bear these worries. Dr. Pectoris particularly cautioned me against worry. And I am sure if something is not done I shall have one of my attacks. I am certain of it, Milwater," she continued solemnly. "I feel it coming on now."

This was the last straw. If there was anything in the wide world that Mr. Milwater dreaded it was one of Mrs. Milwater's "attacks." These mysterious seizures, which upset the whole household for twenty-four hours at a stretch, made poor Milwater the most wretched being on earth, and poured golden guineas into the pockets of the neighbouring practitioners (indeed there was one young gentleman round the corner who lived on a bibulous resident patient and Mrs. Milwater's attacks), had a curious tendency to show themselves whenever Mrs. Milwater required her own way, and found it difficult to obtain.

Indeed, the spontaneous affinity in point of coincidence that existed between Mrs. Milwater's desires and Mrs. Milwater's attacks had formed the basis of much scientific speculation as a curious mental phenomenon in the mind of the young gentleman aforesaid.

And Mr. Milwater heard the announcement of the coming "attack" with a painful expression of alarm on his mild face.

"Don't, my dear, for goodness sake, don't give way!" he implored, quite energetically, "you shall not be worried about the matter. I will do anything you wish, I—I will get rid of Dolling at once, and—and put a stop to all this, I will indeed. Only don't give way, my love. I—I must really go to the City—half-an-hour late, my dear, already. Good-bye."

And Mr. Milwater hurried on his overcoat, picked up his hat, and made for the door frantically.

"Milwater," said the poor afflicted, in a solemn voice, "I rely upon you."

"You can, my dear, you can," was the answer, and Mr. Milwater flew down stairs and into his

carriage as if he were pursued by a dozen demons, while Mrs. Milwater, having refreshed her jaded energies with half-a-tumbler of sherry went triumphantly down to the kitchen to bully the cook.

CHAPTER II.

MR. MILWATER RECEIVES SOME STARTLING INTELLIGENCE

"WHATEVER shall I do?" groaned anxious Mr. Milwater, passing his hand frantically through his scanty hair, and looking the picture of abject despair.

He was sitting alone in his private room at his warehouse in Lower Thames Street, and had just finished opening his letters. He had barely read the contents of any of them, his mind being too full of his spouse and her commands for the even conduct of business, and he now turned away from his desk and glared wildly at the hat-stand, which happened to be the most prominent object in his direct line of vision, as if he meditated a murderous attack upon that inoffensive object.

"Whatever shall I do?" repeated Mr. Milwater. "Maria will never be satisfied until Dolling goes, and Dolling, poor fellow, what is he to do after all these years? Bless the woman, she threatened to come down and discharge him herself! And she'd do it, too, she'd do it, in a twinkling. Shocking woman! No regard for appearances where I am concerned. She is—she is—" Mr. Milwater looked as if he were about to institute an uncomplimentary synonym for his wife, but apparently his customary habit of caution was too strong for him, for he dropped his voice and murmured, "Well, she is undoubtedly a very exceptional woman!"

Poor Milwater! Although he had a great business, which produced him £15,000 a year, a mind easily satisfied, and without an ounce of poetry, good, bad, or indifferent in his composition, he was at that moment the most miserable man in the City of London. He hated domestic strife and terrors, hated scenes of any description, and above all things, he detested change. And here was a situation which promised scenes in plenty, and in which he was bound to figure as the abused on every side. It was awful. However, there was no help for it, he must go through with the matter, and a passing temptation to be called to the country for a few days on important business crossed his mind as a possible mode of temporary relief from his troublesome situation only to be dismissed as hopeless. Some mischief might be done in the meantime, and how would he be able to meet his terrible wife in such a contingency.

In desperation he touched his bell-rope.

"Ask Mr. Frank to step in to me, Barker," he said to the clerk who answered his summons.

"Mr. Frank is not here, sir," replied the clerk, "hasn't come yet."

Mr. Milwater looked at his watch and found that it was past twelve o'clock. He decided that he must see Frank, and hear his version of the story of his possible entanglement with Madge Dolling before he interviewed his old and confidential clerk, and performed the unpleasant task

of putting an abrupt termination to twenty years of faithful service.

A bright idea with regard to Mr. Dolling entered his head. He would persuade that worthy fellow that he had grown old and feeble, that he was positively no longer fitted for the toils of business, and that he must at once retire on a pension. Perhaps that would soften the blow. Mr. Milwater could keep all knowledge of the pension from Mrs. Milwater he felt sure, and he chuckled quite cheerfully over the improved prospect. There was a world of comfort in the reflection, and Mr. Milwater drank a glass of sherry, and read the *Times* in a more cheerful frame of mind. Then he had another look at his letters, found they were unimportant, and as Frank had not yet put in an appearance, Mr. Milwater went out, and fortified his timid soul with lunch and a few more glasses of sherry, a pronouncedly cheerful frame of mind being the consequent result.

When he returned to his office he found a note lying on his desk, addressed to "Joseph Milwater, Esq., " in the familiar handwriting of his manager, Dolling. He opened it in alarm, and read:—

"Heliotrope Cottage,
Clapham, S.E.,
"25th May, 18—

"DEAR SIR,—I regret to have to inform you that the serpent whom I nourished in my bosom has this morning eloped to Brighton with my only daughter.

"The natural grief of a parent and a desire to follow the fugitives will, I trust, be a sufficient excuse for my absence for a few days from my post. Any commands addressed to me at Brown's Hotel, Brighton, whither I am given to understand by the note my daughter left in her room the runaways have gone, will receive my best attention.

"I have the honour to be, dear sir,
"Your faithful servant,
"JOHN DOLLING."

Mr. Milwater was speechless with consternation. Here was a new and embarrassing turn to the tide of affairs! What would Maria say to this? At any rate, his old servant Dolling was innocent in the matter; that was evident, unless this was a deeply-laid plot, of which Milwater could not believe plain John Dolling capable. Still he might have been a little softer in his description of Mr. Frank, the junior partner. This was the cause of Frank's absence, then—the rascal! What on earth would his mother say?

Without more delay, Mr. Milwater put on his hat and coat, left word with a clerk that he was going to Brighton, jumped into a cab, and drove to his son's rooms in Jermyn Street. He would take the precaution to verify his suspicions, and not start for Brighton on a fool's errand, thought Mr. Milwater.

But the answer he received in reply to his inquiries for his son was just what he had anticipated—

"Gone to Brighton, sir, for a few days."

The audacity of the boy to do it all so openly and with such unblushing effrontery! Well, there was no help for it. He must follow them to Brighton, and find out how matters stood.

Mr. Milwater hesitated no longer, but drove on to Victoria Station, dismissed his cabman, and sent the following telegram to Mrs. Milwater:—

"Victoria Station, 2.30 p.m.

"Gone to Brighton. Important business. Will write."

"Mustn't alarm Maria until I have ascertained the exact state of affairs," thought Mr. Milwater, congratulating himself on his shrewdness.

Then he took his ticket and a comfortable seat in the Brighton express, and felt almost happy in the contemplation of his perfect tact.

CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT OF THE FUGITIVES.

THE excellent Mrs. Milwater had just risen from a very substantial lunch, when her husband's telegram was put into her hand.

"'Gone to Brighton. Important business!' The wretch! I don't believe a word of it. He has simply gone there to get out of the way, and to leave all the responsibility of this horrid business to me. But I'll be even with him. I'll teach you that I'm not to be trifled with, Joseph Milwater!"

This was Maria Milwater's view of the matter. And without more ado she ordered three trunks and four bandboxes to be packed, gave fifty opposing instructions concerning the conduct of the household during her absence in one and the same breath, kept four servants running up and down the staircases for the space of half an hour fetching imaginary effects from impossible quarters, and finally deposited herself in the carriage, which had come round to take her for her usual afternoon airing, much to the relief of the entire household.

She had made up her mind to follow the truant to Brighton and to bring him back with her by main force.

"I won't be played with," said the good lady to herself, as her carriage sped to the station. "I'm not Selina Woffer or Henrietta Mincing, or any of those simpletons. When I say a thing I mean it," and a very superior look of determination fixed itself on the rotund countenance of Maria Milwater.

In this excellent frame of mind she took her seat in the carriage, after worrying her footman and three porters out of their lives concerning her three trunks and the four bandboxes, and glaring at everyone through her *pince-nez* within glaring distance as if they were mortal enemies.

Then she conceived an idea that the particular novel which she required to beguile the journey was in one of the three trunks, but she was in much the same state of uncertainty concerning the particular trunk which contained the desired article as is the tyro who is set to discover the nimble pea under one of the three thimbles by the wily professors of that classic feat. She was actually contemplating the unlocking of each individual trunk for the purpose of discovering the volume when the bell rang, and she was politely informed that she would have to remain behind examining her luggage if her mind was so bent upon the finding of the novel, or, failing that alternative, she must buy another copy at the bookstall. This was an extravagant suggestion which did

not suit Mrs. Milwater's parsimony, a quality upon which she prided herself, so she sent her footman for a copy of *The Queen* and congratulated herself on having saved a clear eighteen-pence.

At last the train steamed out of the station, much to the relief of the perspiring and breathless "Tummas," who made his way back to the carriage and confided to the coachman that the "missus was a cruel treat," an unintelligible combination of noun and adjective for which the concoctors of slang in this inventive age must be held responsible.

Mrs. Milwater was whirled down to Brighton, extremely satisfied with herself and very indignant at her unfortunate husband. She amused herself between whiles by rehearsing in her mind the various attitudes of scorn, derision, despair, and nervous collapse to which she promised herself she would in turn subject the peace-loving Milwater when she had discovered him. She even composed some of the lofty sentences which she intended to shower upon the luckless wight, in order to cause him to follow her back to town, like a runaway schoolboy who has been caught, caned, and marched back to school.

The indulgence in these pleasant meditations shortened the journey considerably, and Mrs. Milwater found herself at Brighton sooner than she had expected. A corresponding amount of trouble to that which had occurred at the other end, of course, arose concerning her plentiful luggage, but in time they were all deposited in a fly and instructions given to the decrepit flyman to drive the lady to the Superb, the hotel at which the Milwaters invariably sojourned when they sought the briny ocean at London-on-sea, and where Mrs. Milwater felt assured of pouncing unexpectedly upon her truant spouse.

Judge of her astonishment, then, when just as her fly turned into the King's Road that cumbersome carriage nearly collided with another antiquated vehicle, in which was seated the veritable Milwater himself—hot, dusty, tired, and looking very much in want of his dinner.

Mrs. Milwater espied her husband in a moment, and so astonished was she at having discovered the runaway so soon that her sense of etiquette, none too keen at the best of times, was quite lost sight of, and, raising herself in her chariot, she screamed—"Joseph! Milwater! Stop, stop! Can't you hear me?" and a dozen other ejaculations.

But Mr. Milwater either could not, or would not hear, his gaze being concentrated upon some object in front of his conveyance, which apparently engaged his whole attention, and upon which he strained his eyes as if his life depended upon keeping it in view.

To make matters worse Mrs. Milwater's decrepit driver pulled up short, and putting his hand to his ear, turned slowly round to his fare and said with great deliberation:

"Beg pardon 'm. Rather hard o' hearin' 'm. What was you pleased to say 'm?"

This was beyond all patience. Here was Mr. Milwater and his chariot disappearing as rapidly as a sea-side fly and its occupant could disappear, and Mrs. Milwater was stopped dead in the chase by a deaf cab-driver.

"Drive on, man, drive on!" screamed Mrs.

Milwater. "I want you to catch that gentleman!"

"Fetch a gentleman, 'm?" said the ancient Jehu. "Which gentleman, 'm? There's such a heap of 'em about here." And he took a leisurely survey of both sides of the road.

Mrs. Milwater was frantic.

"Drive on, sir, as fast as you can," she screamed, hurrying him onwards with her parasol.

"Past the Grand, 'm?" said the exasperating driver. "I'm a-goin' past the Grand, 'm. I think I know Brighton as well as any coachman about, and I don't count upon bein' taught."

A crowd was collecting when, by dint of frantic gesticulations and frequent screaming, Mrs. Milwater contrived to convey to the placid mind of the elderly coachman the state of her desires, and he whipped up his horse and sped along the road followed by a dozen whooping urchins.

The chase was in full force, and by dint of much lashing and galloping Mrs. Milwater was landed abreast of her husband.

"Milwater!" said the injured lady, fixing the astonished drysalter with her terrible eye, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Mr. Milwater looking round in astonished alarm, and seeing that it was his wife in the actual flesh, he bade his coachman pull up and alighting, handed his wife into his own vehicle.

"Drive on, coachman, we shall lose them," shouted Mr. Milwater, and off the cumbersome fly started with Mrs. Milwater's deaf charioteer bringing up the rear, in pursuit of a rapidly disappearing sociable tricycle which was ridden by a lady and gentleman in full tricycle costume.

"Whatever has brought you down, my dear," said Mr. Milwater anxiously.

"Your perfidy, Joseph Milwater, your base perfidy," said Mrs. Milwater solemnly, rolling out the terrible word "perfidy" with extreme unctuousness, as the one word in the English language which most aptly expressed the shocking behaviour of Mr. Milwater.

"I don't understand you my love," said the bewildered drysalter, "you received my telegram?"

"I did sir," responded Mrs. Milwater. "But do you think for one instant that I am to be cajoled by your base subterfuges, by your paltry excuses? You have a woman to deal with, Joseph Milwater, not a baboon, or a giraffe, or a hippopotamus, or some other poor inoffensive creature. Out, sir, I despise you!"

"But my dear Maria, you don't understand—"

"I understand quite enough sir," retorted Mrs. Milwater, "although you may insult me by thinking that my mind cannot soar to the height of your lofty comprehension, but you may rest assured—"

"There! they're out of sight—we shall lose them I'm certain," groaned Mr. Milwater, his attention, despite the distracting influence of Mrs. Milwater's observations, still being bent a-head.

"I demand that you will listen to me, Milwater," said his irate spouse. "How dare you take your attention from me, sir? I say that your cowardly conduct in running away from town is base in the extreme. No man would have done it, sir, let me tell you. But you're not a man, Joseph Milwater," pursued the lady with withering scorn; "it sounds like flattery even to call you a thing, but that's what you are, Milwater—a thing!"

"They've turned the corner—there—they're gone!" and Mr. Milwater leant back in the carriage in despair.

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Joseph?" inquired Mrs. Milwater, "that you behave in this idiotic manner."

"I don't think so, Maria, at present," moaned the unhappy gentleman; "but there is no knowing how soon I shall have them driven out of me, particularly if you cannot hold your tongue and listen."

"Hold my tongue, sir!" screamed Mrs. Milwater furiously, "do you think I married you to be told to hold my tongue?"

"I don't know what you married me for," said Mr. Milwater, lashed into desperation, "unless it was to make my life a burden to me. For Heaven's sake be quiet, Maria," he added, as Mrs. Milwater again essayed to speak, "while I tell you——"

But Mrs. Milwater was so overpowered by this amazing display of spirit on the part of her meek husband, that she had but one immediate resource left, and throwing herself in a heap in the corner of the fly, she flourished her arms wildly, emitted a fearful shriek, and prepared forthwith to have an "attack" of the most pronounced description.

"Don't Maria, don't, for goodness' sake!" ejaculated Mr. Milwater, who was well acquainted with the premonitory symptoms of Mrs. Milwater's periodical seizures, and immediately identified her alarming behaviour on this occasion as a certain precursor of a disagreeable situation.

"I must rouse her," thought Mr. Milwater, and he forthwith shouted in her ear, "Frank and Dolling's daughter have run away here from town. They are on the sociable I have been following Maria, for——"

But, alas poor Milwater! The sudden news only intensified the excited condition of Mrs. Milwater, and with another fearful shriek or rather series of shrieks, Mrs. Milwater lapsed into hysterics, to the astonishment of the passers-by, the utter bewilderment of her husband, and the infinite amusement of the elderly Jehu who brought up the rear, who, having had experience of the malady in former days in the person of his "old 'oman," felt for the condition of Mrs. Milwater that contempt and indifference which we are told is bred of familiarity.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE CASE STOOD.

In the dining-room of Brown's Hotel stood a little old gentleman with white hair and a benevolent aspect, who looked like a respectable city man of the old school, who was, indeed, what he looked. His name was John Dolling, and he was the confidential manager of Mr. Milwater's drysalting business, who had so aroused Mrs. Milwater's ire by his Machiavellian plots for the possession of her darling son Frank as a son-in-law.

He was looking out of the window into the old-fashioned courtyard of Brown's Hotel, and certainly did not appear to be in that state of distress to be expected from a man whose daughter had run away that very day from her home.

Suddenly Mr. Dolling started, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Bless me! Why there is—no—yes, it is actually Mr. Milwater and his wife," ejaculated John Dolling. "Whatever is the matter? It cannot be that——"

But his ruminations were cut short by the appearance of his employer and Mrs. Milwater, who had alighted from their vehicle, and entered the room in a happy state of dust and disorder. Mrs. Milwater apparently had brought her sudden seizure to a termination before she arrived at the hotel, for her eye alighted upon the benevolent-looking Dolling with tolerable collectedness, but she gave one of her startling shrieks when she had identified her husband's clerk.

"Milwater," said the excited lady, pointing tragically to the object of her animadversion, "behold the monster!"

Mr. Dolling was so startled by this unexpected greeting from his employer's wife that he could only gaze at her in stupid consternation, while Mr. Milwater looked from one to the other and nervously bit his finger nails.

"How dared you sir," continued Mrs. Milwater, advancing a step forward in the direction of the astonished Dolling, "I ask you in the name of common decency, how dared you!" And she stood glaring at John Dolling with all the appearance of outraged dignity at her command.

"I—I really think there must be some unhappy mistake, madam," gasped Dolling when he had recovered his breath, "I am quite at a loss to—to——"

"You hear this, Milwater," said the outraged matron, "you hear the unblushing effrontery of this creature and you stand there silent. I am ashamed of you. Remember this, sir," she said turning round suddenly upon the unhappy Dolling, "that your schemes are of no avail. Not another peuny of my money shall you ever touch, I have done."

Mr. Milwater breathed a sigh of relief on hearing this last announcement.

"But, Mrs. Milwater, surely I may be permitted——"

"Not another word sir," said Mrs. Milwater turning away with lofty resolution. "I will listen to no excuses from such a wretch. You have deceived me grossly, and so far as lies in my power you shall suffer for it. Milwater, be good enough to request the attendance of the chamber-maid. We cannot return to-night. I will leave you to settle with this creature."

Mr. Milwater signalled to his manager to await his return and conducted his spouse out of the room, when he consigned her to the care of the manageress, and Mrs. Milwater soon found distraction from her numerous cares in the pleasing task of setting every servant in the hotel at work in the vain effort to supply her inexhaustible demands.

Meanwhile, Mr. Milwater was returning to the dining-room to "have it out" with his friend Dolling, when in crossing the hall he ran against no other person than his son Frank in the most approved cycling costume strolling in from the entrance. He was in the act of lighting a cigar when Mr. Milwater came upon him.

"Well sir, what—what the dickens have you got

to say for yourself sir?" was the father's first exclamation.

"Hallo, governor, what are you doing here?" said Frank looking up in astonishment from his cigar. "I thought you were in town."

"So I was until I started on this wild goose chase. And your mother is here too," said Mr. Milwater in a voice of solemnity.

"My mother! What brings her down? Are you going to make a stay of it?" said Frank, trying another light for the cigar.

"Make a stay of it!" echoed Mr. Milwater aghast at his coolness. "Come, Frank, you know, this won't do. This bragging the whole affair out won't do for me. Your mother is heart-broken."

"Pon my soul I haven't the faintest notion what you are driving at," said his son, after a perplexed stare at his excellent father. "On my honour I don't understand you."

"Read that sir," roared Mr. Milwater, exasperated by this dull-headedness, first of servant, then of son, into something like severity, "read that. Perhaps you don't understand that." And Mr. Milwater having searched in his pockets for Dolling's note of the morning, thrust it into his son's hands.

Frank read it, and then looked at his father contemplatively.

"This is a bad business for Dolling," he said, "but I'm dashed if I know what it has to do with me, or you either. Only I'm awfully sorry for the old man. Is he down here?"

"He is, sir," said Mr. Milwater, who was choking with rage at his son's consummate effrontery.

"The deuce!" said Mr. Frank, "why we shall have the whole warehouse down here soon in detachments."

"Now sir, perhaps you know why I have been chasing after you the whole of this blessed day, taking a cab from A—— because the line was blocked and there was no getting another train for two hours. And on the road I sighted you on a sociable with the girl——"

"Oh yes, Miss Roller, a member of our Tricycle Club. Her brother and another young lady member came down with us," said Mr. Frank, "we came down by easy stages. First rate run though. But what were you chasing me for, in the name of all that's sensible?"

Mr. Milwater stared at his son incredulously.

"Do you mean to tell me, Frank, that you are really not the person referred to in that letter?"

"Me? Good heavens, no!" roared Frank, and he looked at his incredulous parent in most undoubtedly genuine astonishment. "And you've been running about after me thinking that I had eloped with—well, I'm hanged!" And Mr. Frank dropped into a chair and shook his sides with uncontrollable merriment.

Mr. Milwater took a seat at his son's side and continued to stare at that risible young gentleman in hopeless bewilderment.

"Why she's thirty-five years of age if she's a day," said Frank, when his burst of merriment had subsided, "I haven't exchanged a dozen words with her in my life, and the fellow referred to is undoubtedly a German who lodged with old Dolling, and who was giving me lessons in the language. I thought it desirable to rub up my knowledge of that beastly tongue for the sake of the business, and Dolling recommended this fellow to me."

"Then it's all a mistake, Frank?" said poor Milwater.

"That's just what it is, sir, and a dashed silly mistake, if you'll excuse me."

"It's your mother, Frank, with her—her usual discrimination," said Milwater, "and to think that I have been thrown into this state of mind all for nothing!"

"The fact of it is, dad," said Frank, "my weakness lies in that direction," and he nodded his head towards the grounds in the rear, where two young ladies were walking up and down. "Roller, Jennings, and Roller, the paper people you know, governor. They're a crack lot and she's the dearest—"

"I daresay Frank, I—I quite approve of it," said Mr. Milwater, who was in too much perplexity of mind to lend an attentive ear to the recital of his son's matrimonial designs. "But the immediate question is what is to be done now. Here your mother has been in hysterics and, worse than that, I am afraid, mortally insulted poor Dolling. I don't know what to say to the man, I don't, indeed."

"Well, look here, governor," said Frank, after a moment's consideration, "I'll go and settle my mother, and you must square it with Dolling. Tell him—tell him whatever you think of first," said Frank, with a happy stroke of inspiration, "apologize at any rate, and ask him to dine with us, and it will be all right. Where is my mother?"

"Upstairs," replied Mr. Milwater. "But you really think you can manage your mother?" he added, doubtfully.

"Of course," said his hopeful son. "Now, you cut along to Dolling. I'll order dinner. We'll all dine together."

And while Frank went in search of his maternal parent, Mr. Milwater ruefully betook himself to the dining-room.

Mr. Dolling was still sitting in a corner doubled up, so to speak, with perplexity, when his employer entered, and making a bold dash for it, stepped straight up to him, and shook him by the hand.

"John Dolling, my friend," said Mr. Milwater, shaking his manager's arm up and down like a pendulum in his nervous agitation, "we've been together for twenty years, and, God willing, we'll be together for twenty years more. You understand me, John?"

"I do, sir. I've always understood you, but Mrs. Milwater——"

"Ah, she's a very exceptional woman," said Mr. Milwater, in a tone of deep mystery, "a very exceptional woman, liable to 'attacks.' You're a man of the world, John, like myself, and you, doubtless, understand 'attacks.'"

"She certainly attacked me, sir," began Mr. Dolling.

"Yes, John, she was labouring under the combined influence of a misapprehension and an 'attack.' We will say no more about it; Mrs. Milwater will apologize handsomely—I—I believe and trust, and if she doesn't, why, don't take any notice of it. Remember, she is a very exceptional woman. And what about your runaways, eh, John?"

"I found them, Mr. Milwater, but they are married and the deed is done. And I am getting on in years and too old to quarrel, so I've forgiven them and sent them off to enjoy themselves.

But my girl ought to have known better, at her age."

"Of course, my friend," said Mr. Milwater, who was quite airily disposed now that his perplexities seemed ended; "and we must put our heads together and see what we can do. A post in the warehouse, John, perhaps will meet the case, eh?"

"Really, Mr. Milwater," said John Dolling, "you are very kind—"

"No, no, Dolling," interrupted the exuberant drysalter, "not a word. We've known each other too long for compliments. You'll join our party at dinner, and we'll drink the health of the newly married couple. By-the-way, John, a little nip of sherry and angostura now—eh—what do you think?"

They made a lively party at Brown's Hotel that evening, and Mrs. Milwater did apologize most handsomely to her husband's confidential servant. But to the end of his days John Dolling never fathomed the mystery of the motive which induced Mrs. Milwater to shower upon him the full length of her formidable mind. And to the end of Mr. Milwater's days, his excellent but unreasonable wife would never permit herself to take any other view of her husband's journey to Brighton than that which she had so forcibly expressed to him in the Brighton fly, despite all the evidences to the contrary.

And Mr. Milwater at length resigned himself in despair to hearing his well meaning efforts on that momentous occasion described by his irascible wife, whenever a domestic difference arose and he was receiving his usual castigation from Mrs. Milwater's forcible tongue, as "the occasion of your base perfidy, Joseph Milwater, which I shall never forget!"



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CHAPTER VI.

AN ENTERTAINMENT.

THERE was a pause after Edith's expression of sympathy with "poor Dick."

"Well, as papa said," returned Cicely, "he deserved no better at her hands. He would not trouble himself about her. I went to see her every day. I was always careful, too, to talk as she did. After all, I think Dick and your—ahem—Mr. Aylmer should go together—they are birds of a feather."

"Cicely!" said Edith warmly, "I cannot endure this—do you wish to affront me?"

"You cross thing! I shall go if you are cross. Mr. Pulsford will see me home; then you will be alone. Why cannot you comprehend a joke?"

"I do not like jokes of a personal nature," said Edith coldly.

"Is she not cross with poor me, Mr. Pulsford? Will Lady Mary get down to-night, Edith?"

"No, I think not; she has been poorly all day. I did not know it in the morning, or I would have begged Mrs. Pomfret to have excused me."

"It is horrid, dear, feeling bound to do this and that, what other people choose; to have to ask permission in everything—is it not, dear?"

"Beggars must not be choosers. I have no godmother to turn to. Those who work must not grumble—eh, Mr. Pulsford?" queried Edith, with the slightest inclination of her eyelids, and a faint touch of irony in her voice. She wondered if her cavalier would defend her and be her champion. But no, he was afraid to do that before Cicely she found. He would not have the courage to fight a losing battle.

"Certainly!" replied he, smiling obsequiously and faintheartedly, "but where I give lessons I will assert myself—they like you better for it. But then it is different with you, Miss Heron, perhaps you can scarcely be so independent as I can be." Edith's lip curled with disdain. Had he been brave he could have helped her out better than that.

"Edith might have a school," suggested Cicely. "Only you see it is so difficult to do that and hold one's head up. Common people who have grown rich will send their children, and they vulgarize it. Dr. Desforges says he knows some ladies well born who had a large establishment; they discontinued it. I expect common people sent their children, and the better class withdrew. One of the ladies writes novels now; I will lend you one of her novels, Edith—that is, if Dr. Desforges is agreeable, he lent it me. But it is very namby-pamby, dear. I like something full of surprises. Should you like to conduct a school, Edith? But, oh, it is such a wearisome life. You find it so, Edith? Should you care to look forward to such a life?"

"I am not afraid to look forward, Cicely. But I am very happy as I am. My little pupils are good little girls and very affectionate."

"But the Dean's wife interferes horribly with you. I know she cannot help it. She does with her servants and everybody, and I know she will with you, if she has not done already. Papa says the Dean's first wife was a different kind of woman—Mr. Edward's mother. She was like Edward Pomfret, mild and good-tempered, but oh, so peculiar a woman, dressing so old, no at all dressy like this Mrs. Pomfret. She is often gaudy, I think. Haven't you noticed how fond she is of dark silks with light sprays. I can just remember the first Mrs. Pomfret—her portrait hangs in Mr. Edward's room. When she was out dressed, she was a perfect fright—she looked like a Quaker."

"I rather like frights," said Edith wickedly. "They always seem to have something sterling about them."

"Don't you think, Mr. Pulsford, Edith has queer tastes?" inquired Cicely, with a little grimace. "I appeal to you, Mr. Pulsford!" Cicely was completely victimized.

"Really—ah—I do not know what to say, Miss Devenssey; I don't like interfering with people's tastes."

"Oh, I must not come to you, I see. But Edith is vain enough to think she can talk in such a way—"

"Cicely!" said Edith, warningly.

"Well, the first Mrs. Pomfret never in her life was so good-looking as you are, Edith——"

"I never had the pleasure of knowing the first Mrs. Pomfret, you see," said Mr. Pulsford seriously.

"It was the Honourable Mrs. Pomfret, Mr. Pulsford," said Cicely tartly; "some people would have said the honour of knowing her. Her father was noble."

"Cicely says she can remember her, I cannot," said Edith. "Aunty thought much of her, but she was not nearly so old as my aunt. She was one of my sponsors, perhaps you did not know that, dear."

"That would be before that dreadful man made such work with Lady Mary, before the lawsuit. Oh, you would be so much better off then, dear. Mr. Pulsford, Lady Mary had men-servants, and a pair of horses. Oh dear, does it not make Lady Mary sad at times?"

"No. I think, Cicely, you make too much of our despondency. You would not have us be cheerful. Talk about something else, Cicely; I wish you would. You are in a very odd humour to-night, I do not know what to think of you. Where is Dick?"

"I don't know, and I won't say where I think he is. But talking of Dick. Have you heard the news? We are going to get up an entertainment. I don't know whether Dick will be in it. He talks of going."

"Leaving Tremenister?"

"It is all fudge. I shall not believe he is going until I see his portmanteau in the hall."

"What is the entertainment?" asked Edith.

"It is scarcely decided yet, dear. Concerts do not pay their way very well, if there is only local talent. Only a certain set will go, and we cannot get the Assembly Rooms full. We have thought of the amateur theatricals; Dick has been a prominent member. If we wished him to stay and he had determined to go, it would tempt him to linger. The amateurs took very well last year. The Dispensary is awfully short of funds, the patients are backward, the expenses are heavy; and as I said before, there is a certain class of people who think they ought to be cured for nothing."

"People will not pay shillings for concerts," observed Mr. Pulsford, who spoke no doubt from bitter experience.

"No, they will not, Mr. Pulsford, and we want the shillings as well as the half-crowns. Last year they came in crowds to see a play—some, out of the country—a distance. The worst thing is, the young men are backward this year, none of them care to take female parts."

"I don't wonder at them," laughed Edith.

Dick thought of engaging some ladies from the Kelstern Theatre, but then Dick says if they were to do so it is just possible some of the reserved seat people would think there was something disreputable about the affair. Then, again, they require so much money to come, and Dick is afraid the profits would go in expenses. And it is no good working for them."

"There are no young ladies in Tremenister who would come forward?" suggested Mr. Pulsford.

"That is just what we have been discussing. There are some no doubt who would come forward, but we wish to keep the company select."

"Shall you—do you feel inclined to take a part?" inquired Mr. Pulsford of Cicely.

"Oh, Cicely!" exclaimed Edith.

"Why not? I have not quite decided though. I thought I would mention it to you. I shall mention it to Mrs. Pomfret. It is for a charitable object."

Edith could scarcely repress a smile. Dr. Devensey was a dispensary doctor. There were good salaries. Cicely's friends had a stake in the contemplated performance.

"I thought, Edith, you might take a part," ventured Cicely at last. "You know you sang at the last concert, and accompanied all the songs, if you remember."

"So I did, but that was so different. How I was criticized for my poor little song, as if I could help my voice not being perfect. We had not Mr. Pulsford then, or he would have been an acquisition."

"Most happy," murmured Mr. Pulsford, showing his white teeth. No doubt Mr. Pulsford thought his services would have been to him a most excellent advertisement. Edith thought so a little impatiently, but then her common sense told her it was not for her to decry such eagerness where a man had to earn his living.

"What do you say to helping, Edith," asked Cicely, point blank.

"I do not think I could. I do not see where I could help. Besides, what would aunty say? I feel sure she would object. Again, I have to think of other things."

"Oh, I shall make a round to-morrow," said Cicely, determinedly, "and gather public opinion. I shall go to the Deanery first, and see your Mrs. Pomfret."

"Cicely, you must not tell her I am connected with the affair, or wish to be——"

"You will not be so ungenerous as to refuse to help us, dear?"

"What could I do?" Edith already felt her nerves.

"Take a part, to be sure. I rather like the idea myself. If I am there, surely you need not be afraid. Oh, the fun of being made love to!"

"But I am afraid. I could never face all the people. I should forget my part, and break down."

"Pooh, that is all nonsense," said the over-confident Cicely.

"You have not asked Mr. Pulsford!"

"Because," returned Cicely, "I feel sure he will not refuse; he will not require any asking. I am confident he will do his best to help us."

"If I can do anything——"

"You hear, Edith, if he will *you* must. I can take no refusal now."

"Cicely, dear, you are so importunate; I must have time to consider."

"I wish Dick would come," said Cicely. "Perhaps he will not come. Papa has been talking to Dick, and Dick has been away all day. He went off fishing, and I only saw him for a few minutes before I came here, and the foolish fellow attaches blame to me. If he is idle, I cannot prevent papa talking to him; he deserves all he gets. Dick does not know yet what we are thinking of doing. Mr. Pulsford, do you think the tenor would sing? I hear he has some capital songs."

"I will ask him. He appears to be an obliging person."

"He sang," said Cicely, "at an entertainment away, I hear; but there he was paid. We shall want him to sing for nothing, you know. He must be told that, or he may expect payment. There would be a little expense. The Society have a proscenium and some scenery; everyone must find their own dress. We shall want some one at the piano. We might have the volunteer band, but they are such selfish men. They will not do anything unless they are paid. Four would be sufficient with the piano; but that can be considered after. They play very nicely, cornet, violin, piccolo, oboe. Dick would take the second violin, only he will be wanted upon the stage. Oh, Edith, I *must* go home, see how late it is. Dick does not come; he is sulking, I expect."

"He has not really quarrelled with you, Cicely?" said Edith.

"We all disapproved of his conduct, dear."

"Poor fellow!"

"So he leaves me to get home as I can—there's brotherly love. But I know, Edith, if Dick were to fire the Cathedral, you would either sympathize with him or find some excuse for him."

"I believe I should," laughed Edith. "I should judge he had gone crazy. Mr. Pulsford, will see you home, Cicely."

"Most happy," agreed Mr. Pulsford.

"Then you will be left alone, Edith?"

"True, Cicely. But then Mr. Pulsford will go shortly, if he does not go now. I shall go up to aunty, and talk to her for a little time, if she is awake."

"Now, Mr. Pulsford," said Cicely, briskly, "I am quite ready."

CHAPTER VII.

MER POSSIBLE FUTURE.

WHEN the door closed upon Cicely Devensey, with a sigh of relief and with clasped hands Edith Heron sank back in her chair. The piano was open, Mr. Pulsford's music sheet as he had placed it—he had forgotten to take it away with him—Cicely had put it out of his head; she had come in and put all music aside. What a terrible evening it had been; Cicely's voice had almost become an infliction. If Mr. Pulsford was not disagreeable, he was taciturn and *gauche*. Indeed, Cicely had seemed to entirely appropriate Mr. Pulsford. Edith might have felt wounded at this had she not been supremely above such petty weaknesses. Somehow she felt almost grateful for this small mercy. Mr. Pulsford might be an honest fellow, but he had not much in common with her, at times the thought of him as an accepted lover weighed somewhat heavily on Edith's mind. Edith shrank from the contemplation of an engagement; there would be then no withdrawal according to her sense of honour. She felt herself guilty, tolerating his visits, giving him the barest encouragement to call at the house. He must soon press for an engagement, and what could she say to him? She would be bound after what had passed to assent to his importunity. He had already hinted of his aspiration and mapped out

the future. She would not have the courage to tell him he had not gained her heart. Was it her fault entirely? Had it not been repeatedly urged upon her that it was the best thing she might expect? Even Lady Mary had coincided with this, and painted a very dark picture of a needy old maid's lonely life. Edith was so accustomed to be dutiful to her aunt that expressing dissent seemed to her like flying in her best friend's face. Her habit of obedience caused her to feel that she must not rebel against her aunt's ordinances and wishes. Her aunt! even such affinity was doubtful—the law had decided that there was no kinship, or she would be in a more independent position. Edith herself had doubt of the relationship. She could not forget the dissolute and irregular life of the man whose humour it was to declare persistently that he was her parent. His life had appalled her in her childhood. It would have been to his interest to have had his declaration assented to, it would have been a grave reflection upon him to have confessed otherwise after his oath in a court of justice. For a long time the great difference between Captain Heron and his wife was because they had no children. A sum of money depended upon that, the interest of which Captain Heron would enjoy until the youngest was of age. He was a violent, unprincipled man, and sometimes his wife was ready to do anything to obtain peace. Captain Heron had never favourably impressed Edith when she was a child. Looking back, his show of affection seemed insincere; she believed it now to have been sheer simulation. However, to the last no word escaped him whereby she could infer he had played a part. The duplicity, if there was any, might have rested with his weak-spirited wife. Strange things had been done in the world; if she was a substitution, or had been foisted upon him, it had no doubt been done before. If she were not genuine she was glad the suit had ended against her. If she really was Augustus Heron's child, there had been gross carelessness; she had been most unfairly dealt with; her parents were highly reprehensible in not securely establishing her paternity. But the habits and evil courses of a confirmed gambler rise up against him; no faith is to be put in a being whose every impulse is of a shady character, and whose practices in season and out of season will scarcely bear the light of day. Once only had Lady Mary referred to her journey to the rescue of the motherless and almost deserted babe—a tiny impoverished infant in the hands of a compassionate, if scarcely creditable, being, bearing the name of woman. So terrible had the picture seemed to Edith, so vivid was Lady Mary's recital, so grievous her expression, Edith had often closed her eyes contemplating it. How humble it had made her! She felt she could not resent anything when this knowledge rose up to confront her. Lady Mary had always believed her to be her nephew's child; never doubting his asseverations, his oath, if Tremminster opinion was honestly one of disbelief in him. Lady Mary always treated Edith as her grandniece, boldly standing her ground, her first thought the child's welfare. But there was the miserable doubt!

Lady Mary was bitter against Tremminster opinion; she would declare she knew what Tremminster people were—ever ready to take the view the least lenient. While her own fortune

remained intact, the poor lady chuckled. The child, real or false, should inherit from her. It was sufficient that her faith was firm. But when misfortune reached Lady Mary, then only did she wish that public opinion should go with her. When she found it still remained errant, her constant thought was seeing the child, now grown into a woman, married to some honest and worthy gentleman.

In her eagerness, Lady Mary had perfect faith in the Dean's wife's representations; not a breath of doubt traversed her mind after her first scruples. Mr. Pulsford was not exactly the young fellow she had pictured. Mr. Pulsford had been a promising chorister in a cathedral, had availed himself of the education which opens with such a post; he had become a proficient musician. He had taken his degree and gained a medal at the Academy. The Dean also assured Lady Mary that the young man was a superior person, and quite competent to fill Dr. Olde's place when the old organist should resign.

Edith Heron could scarcely withstand such arguments.

The Dean's wife was always contriving to bring them together. She often had Mr. Pulsford at the Deanery, and she would have him see Edith home.

Edith Heron felt that this adroit tactician was urging the young man to follow up his opportunities after she had impressed Lady Mary with Mr. Pulsford's good qualities. It was very kind of people looking to her future, Edith Heron thought; it was difficult for her to fight against such a cabal with such an organization. But to be in a way compelled to enter into such a contract filled her with a grave and undefined anxiety. Perhaps much of her repugnance was due to this moral compulsion. She felt she could never realize the romance of love with this *protégé* of the Dean's wife. He had few of the qualities of the lover. Voice, manner, appearance—everything was against him. Still he might prove himself to be a most loyal husband. Edith was never unjust. Only she felt afraid he would be unsatisfied if he gained no reciprocal feeling from her. But to be poor and dependent all her life?

Cicely Devensey said poverty was unbearable; Edith was fain to think that Cicely was right. She knew the strain there is to keep up appearances. Even Lady Mary's ingenuity was often taxed, but then Lady Mary had been accustomed to feel no pressure. Sometimes the poor old lady forgot her straitened means, and launched out into extravagance; as surely followed her retribution. She retained many good friends, but even such dependence was most galling.

The salary Edith earned was indeed an object, and Edith was only too thankful it had been placed in her way. But although she could not help concurring with Cicely Devensey in Cicely's estimate of the miseries in the train of poverty, Cicely's words and manner had goaded even her tender and yielding spirit. Cicely had not intended to wound, perhaps, but Edith felt for all that it was most inconsiderate on Cicely's part, if it was not unfeeling. If she had really cared for Mr. Pulsford, how Cicely had ignored it.

Edith was fain to believe that Mr. Pulsford regarded Cicely with much more consideration

after Cicely's declaration of her independent position.

How bitter Cicely was against that unoffending Mr. Aylmer. What other crime than poverty was *his* offence? Then Edith laughed to herself; she believed that at one time Cicely had a certain admiration for Dick's hermit friend, overlooking then the grave defects of his life. What bitterness, too, she exhibited when the poor photograph was shown. How stupid of Cicely to attach blame to the son for the father's mistake, were it a mistake. How persistent Cicely was showing Mr. Pulsford the view and giving him the family history of the Aylmers. Formerly Cicely was not so critical when Mr. Aylmer was canvassed. Why had not Dick come? Was it all a tarradiddle about this grave disagreement at home? Edith well knew that the graceless fellow was often enough in disgrace, but she was always inclined to believe Cicely was not a good help where lameness lay. Perhaps Cicely had never requested Dick to fetch her. If Dick had been absent all day he would not know where his sister was.

Edith smiled to herself. Had Cicely any other idea in her crafty little head? Did she wish to tempt Mr. Pulsford from his allegiance? He was not in a position to be independent. That which he had he earned; perhaps the extent of his possessions did not consist in the fewness of his wants. Cicely's five thousand pounds had an overpowering ring. That might be a clever shaft of Cicely's. It gained upon Edith, Cicely Devensey's whole aim that night was bringing herself forward. Happily, Edith contemplated the catastrophe with sufficient *sang froid*.

"Thank goodness," murmured she, "I can contemplate being left out in the cold with composure."

Only she felt very much as if her life was to be a lonely and deserted one. Her possible future without Mr. Pulsford did not fill her with a certain sense of assurance and pleasure. She had been isolated all her life from any perfect confidence, how could she expect it was all being reserved for after delectation?

"I must go up to aunty," she said aloud, "or she will think me long now they are gone. I can come down again and put all these things away. Mrs. Davison has plenty to do without the bother of my litter."

Mrs. Davison was a relic of old prosperous days, an old servant. She had married, and was only too thankful to get back again to Lady Mary's, her worthless husband having quickly squandered her savings, and then absconded. When Davison returned to Lady Mary, her old mistress had not fallen upon her evil days, when they did come Davison bravely elected to stay as sole servant. So true she proved, Lady Mary often declared, but for Davison it would be impossible to keep a house over her head. Edith's willing hands and heart eased Davison of many a task, and often Edith, considering the old servant, would attend to the door herself.

Poor Lady Mary was awake when Edith entered her chamber.

"Are you better aunty?" was Edith's first inquiry.

(To be continued.)

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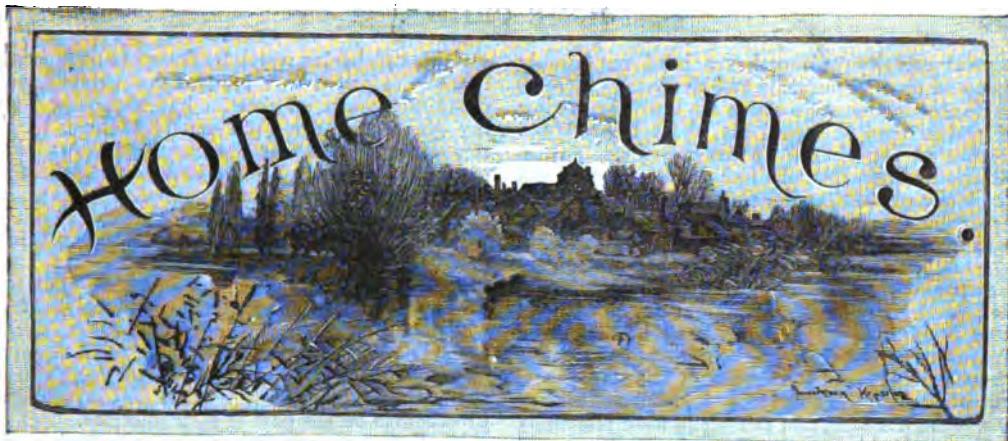


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VOL. III. No. 46.]

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"THE PRINCE OF FABLE."

A STORY OF THE AUTHOR OF "ATALA."
By the Author of "A Modern Minister."

WINTER.

London: the year seventeen hundred and ninety-three: Drury Lane upon a miserable winter's evening. Shops were gleaming through the mist with small temptation to the discomfited passers-by. The poor drew their scanty clothing closer, for a more wet, windy, and cheerless evening had not descended upon London that winter-time. Here and there a group, gathered before the print-shops, seemed oblivious to the weather, under fascination by Gilray's travesties and the Rich and Garrick portraiture. Well patronized also, were the cookery depôts, steaming interiors tempting to the poor of the region. Coffee-shops, tea-shops, early houses, late houses, and all of them horrible places. Stuffed animals, a great feature of this locality at the time, supported by the Fancy. Leather warehouses, so many square inches, a whole colony above, the entire establishment nauseous to the senses. Most of these shady retreats depended for illumination upon guttering tallow candles, some of the larger stores being furnished with quaint old lamps, that at the present day would doubtless fetch high prices for the cabinets.

Of all parts this classic locality presented as mixed and speculative a scene in these days as even London could provide. It was at the time when the City teemed with refugee French, many of whom settled in a colony thereabouts. It increased the cosmopolitan quaintness of the streets, and peopled the dull ways with a vivacious company, well-bred and high-spirited even in trouble. Rooms over shops, rooms under shops, rooms where there were no shops, were let to the unfortunates, and at the time of opening our chronicle were crowded to the garrets by this suffering people.

Those were the sad days of that exodus of the noblesse, the pride of the salons of Versailles; a

noble and brave race taking to ill-fortune with the magnificent *aplomb* of their order. These émigrés taught, or wove, or worked with indomitable energy, as though crushing their heart-breaking beneath Spartan labour. Delicate fingers that had twined the curls of the Antoinette's proud children, taught unkempt young of London back streets. Breasts whereon Louis the Imperial had placed his starry honours, till the court was a gleam of diamond splendour, now bowed and bent to the finesse of lessons in deportment. White-haired empress-like women who had nursed the little Duc de Normandie, in days when the grand Arch-duchess leaned above her ladies and her children happy as a princess in Arcadie, now went forth to nurse the common young of the common city of the world. Grace of the Tuilleries went a-weaving in Spitalfields. Favourites of the Legion of Honour, of purple days, were met on dusky paths bearing great parcels. The supreme beauties of Marie's Court, within whose powdered hair had nestled gems that at this day would have kept them all, were now brushing the oily tresses of Jewess vulgarians of the fried-fish order. They who had clasped hands with Chrétien Malesherbes now door-portered the bacon-stores of Hoxton. The Revolution had done its work thoroughly: Bastille stormed, Versailles overrun by the Vandals, every idol of aristocracy broken, the land cleared of its refinement and given over to the Rabble; gentility turned adrift in London to get a living as described. King George's Government made allowance of one shilling per day to such as chose to accept it; but these were few. With all the poverty one characteristic possession remained —the old proud dignity.

The portly, loose-tongued landlady of one of the most ill-favoured of those dingy dwelling-places, whilst favouring a lodger in arrears, with a piece of her mind, barred the passage on the upper staircase. He was a young man, but twenty-four years of age, whom M. Victor Hugo described later as of "grave and noble expression, the nose firm and imperious, the eyes haughty, a sweet smile occasionally relieving the mouth of its

normal severity; altogether a head remarkably fine, and manner gracious and charming."

He stood three steps above his landlady, a glow of shame kindled upon his cheek beneath the torrent of her abuse. It was only a matter of a silver coin or two, but he had them not, and did not know where to go for them; these poor people never borrowed of one another—it would indeed for the most part have been a matter of difficulty. He had parted with everything but outer garments, and the woman now wanted the coat before he passed. But he would go and try to earn it! Nay, he must leave the coat—how was she sure of his return?—they were a queer lot to trust, these French dogs! And so on. But it was threadbare, not worth half the amount, yet was something of a covering for him, and the winds were piercingly cold—would Madam reconsider? Madam would see him at the Devil first! Arms akimbo, forehead puckered with wrath, right foot stamping furious accompaniment. Whereat he bowed, with the grace that later became a by-word, and removed the garment. There was glimpse of a snowy skin, dazzling as bosoms of the women of his race, the most ancient of the grandesse: and a striped silk shirt, patched by his own hand where it had gone, with bits of calico and print. As he handed it to the woman he bowed his head with sad, sweet shame, and passing on murmured with gracious courtesy—

"My honour that I will return, madam!"

Softened by the breeding and composure, she looked down once on the fair curl-clustered head and the symmetry of form thus driven into the pitiless inclemency of winter—she would never have thought of calling a dog of a Frenchman back—but she did go to his quarter-share of carpetless garret and place another thin old blanket on the pallet, thinking of a big brawny lad of her own whom she had long since turned forth, and who had never returned. She stood hesitating, dangling the coat on her arm, cross with herself for the momentary weakness, then threw it on the bed and went lumbering down the stairs.

And he went into the wind and wet; the street was busy with people going to the theatre, where, on the walls, KEMBLE's name was conspicuous through the haze. The large house all illuminated caused the dimly-lighted shops to look yet more lustreless. One of these checked him, as by a singular fascination, an old book-stall, where great men's minds went for a song, and tattered dreams were rated at the usual estimate of the vulgar. But there was one book that he would have given his last meal for, had he a last meal to give. His eyes rested upon it with livid eagerness, for it was one of his own. One he had never seen in print, sold for a paltry stipend for bread. Written long since in fragrant aisles of Indian woods, with ink from crushed crimson flowers, with pen from the plumage of some gorgeous bird—written by the chase-fires of the braves, upon the flower-stretch between ocean and ocean.

And he wondered if they who had known him afar in beautiful Paris had seen his book; had the dear old Count, his father, away in the stern Château-Ombourg isolation? Had any of those bright spirits whom he had loved in youth, and who had looked up to him all too hopefully? He could have knelt to the miserly keeper of the store for that book, only priced at a few pence, so little

were French brains worth by Drury Lane measure but the old man was pinched and wizened, and dreadfully sharp. This exile had often cast longing glances at some old musty volume, to be repulsed and frozen by the keen, suspicious looks of the proprietor. Yet he had never stood like this, in cold and wet, and coatless, transfixed, as it were, to the spot.

" You are looking lovingly at the volume, monsieur!"

A low, musical voice, a gentle touch upon the arm, a swift glance of pity from a graceful woman, who had just alighted from her carriage before the stage-door of the theatre. Her maid, a page, and two men-servants awaited respectfully in the rear; they were accustomed to unconventional proceedings on the part of their mistress.

He looked up wistfully with large, dark poet-eyes she never afterwards forgot. He saw a being so beautiful—she awed rather than inspired him with any degree of admiration—she did not, indeed, approach to any ideal he had ever conceived.

Before he could utter a word, so complete was his surprise, she had slipped a guinea into his hand, and was sweeping thence with a trail of green velvet and gold, with a flutter of perfume and lace, when he gasped—

" Your name, madame? that I may remember it in my prayers."

She appeared surprised by his earnestness, but replied kindly—

" Sarah Siddons, sir—and yours?" by a playful sort of afterthought.

" François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand."

" I thank you, sir!" And she passed into the theatre with a sweet smile, as though she would leave the happiest possible memory of her gracious act.

He looked down upon the coin nestling in his palm with half-dazed wonder; it was so long since he had seen and handled gold. Shafts of light from the candles gleamed fitfully upon Saint George. As he mechanically turned over the coin, rain-drops dripped from eaves of the bookshop and took the lustre off his Majesty of corresponding title—they might have been tears on the hard old face in gold.

Suddenly, all in a flash, a lithe, slim, dirty hand coiled up, and coin and it were gone before the loser awoke to his misfortune. Creatures of this genus are so dreamy under falling of sudden good or ill; he stood now as dazed over his loss as he had previously been over his good fortune.

" Bless my soul, I saw it done, sir!" cried an elderly clergyman who was standing by, ferreting amongst the books; " saw it done, on my word, and couldn't raise a hand to stop the varlet!"

A kindly-faced old gentleman, who evidently thought himself culpable.

" Why, surely it was gold, sir? I saw it shine!"

" Yes, it was gold." And the young man leaned languidly against the wall, faint and sick at heart, so much had gone with that. It was long since food touched his lips, that book—his book—lost through it, the terrible woman at the lodgings! He had not even realized until 'twas gone how much may be a guinea to the needy. It was not here as in those Indian solitudes; coinage seemed necessary for very life.

" You seem cut up," said the old gentleman,

nervously; "but, my son, think not too deeply on treasures lost."

"Nay, *bon père*, I but thought, if I thought at all, that had the thief but known *my* need, his hand would not have done this cruel thing."

The clergyman was struck by the passionate sadness, yet withal unruffled, reposeful weariness of the reply.

"You are unfortunate."

"I am fortunate—I am dying!" As though in confirmation, he sank upon the muddy pavement; weakness, fatigue, and recent incidents had proved too excessive a strain upon the sensitively-delicate frame.

The old man lifted the tangle of curls, raised the head to his knee, and calling to the wizened owner of the bookstall, said—

"May I carry the youth into your house, friend, until I can have him removed? You know me by sight; I have dealt with you for years."

"As if there was enough got out o' books to open a hotel on; I take oath by Solomon we loses by every book we sells. Don't us?" to his facsimile in female, who came trotting up to see what book was stolen this time.

"Go for a coach!" cried the minister angrily to one of the staring bystanders, who, with hands in pockets, remained fixed.

"It's loikely I's going a-running for coaches, a-wasting master's time, if I ain't rewarded!"

"Bring up the coach, good fellow, and I will see to the reward; and quick, or my——"

The words were lost; the clown had hurried on to the chief entrance of the theatre, where the vehicles were setting down visitors, and presently returned with a hackney-coach to the central objects of an interested and inevitable crowd.

The clergyman had doffed his own overcoat, and fastened it round the girl-like throat of the unfortunate being exposed upon the London pavement. He was interested and affected by the plight one of evident refinement should thus be brought to. The worthy pastor seldom made the journey to town, which he detested for the one fact of its misery; but never did so without actively exerting himself in the cause of some unfortunate or other.

A roll of written paper had fallen from the young man's vest, where it had been treasured next his heart, the safest place in those troublous times, as he knew by sore experience. At the head of this precious manuscript the old man read a word which caused him much perplexity—"ATALA."

SPRING.

SUFFOLK: the year seventeen hundred and ninety-four: Beccles Vicarage; in the study. Musty-backed old tomes from floor to ceiling; oak wainscots; a mulberry-coloured carpet; black marble and bronze ornamentation on the mantel, a huge old-fashioned chimney-place; upon a sideboard a lamp of antique workmanship; a great basket below the table filled with waste scraps, cuttings, and corrected sheets of writing. Carved oak chairs; much black leather work; a mulberry hearth-rug, upon which is a large black dog asleep. Upon a cabinet dating from Queen Anne's day, a mixed array of antiquities, old

bronzes, a few invaluable cameos, fossils, minerals, bugs, moths, dragon-flies from all sorts of sluggish meres, and shells of weird design. Upon a dark inlaid table, constructed to take the bareness off a corner, some rare missals, Church Services from James's day, and a family Bible like a saddle. One painting over the mantel, but the age and indistinctness prevented any one, from the owner downwards, discovering its design. A large window to the ground, the dense folds of mulberry-coloured curtains framing an enchanting picture, the very opposite of the gloomy old study. A wilderness of garden, a perfect waste of wild flowers, and ferns grown lofty as the shrubs, which they folded over and seemed protecting with audacious innocence: bushes and weeds in a maze of luxuriant neglect, moss of the richest pile in every direction: no bloom as yet save primroses thick as the stars of heaven, and banks of violets at foot of each old tree, and these were clustered about with verdure prodigal as in some Indian jungle.

How the lonely amanuensis of the old vicar, who occupied that room day after day at the tedious copying and compiling he had been glad to accept, loved that waste bit of garden to which his window opened! Ever and anon he would look up from the writing, from the musty folios and pages yellow with age, and his eye would traverse the wilderness with a dreamy happiness, recollection of the vast flower-land between the oceans rising like a miraged pain.

Yes, he was happy; days were no longer spectral horrors, grey and grim with a succession of hardships. This work was sweet to him, if only for the gratitude he experienced towards his benefactor. He had another and more sacred joy nestling at his heart apart from this devoted service of penmanship, for he had discovered the ideal of which until this he had but dimly dreamed, the poetic conception of his "*Atala*"; nursed in swart forests beneath crimson skies, on stretches of Savanna by hot slow streams, through leopard haunts, on prairie ways where no object broke the view that seemed to reach infinity, in caves where the lion whelps glared upon his thoughtful face, on great rough rocken hills where his poniard had carved a cross while his mind was busy with the germs of the *Génie du Christianisme*; at last, and here in this quiet country house.

The antiquaries of Suffolk were proud to number the old clergyman amongst their number; and his time was divided between his parish and his hobby, visiting his poor, and searching his fields for meteoric stones; exploring old ruins, or leisurely turning over the contents of dusty bookstalls; or diving to fathomless recesses of historic libraries, or sleeping away the hours in his old-fashioned dining-room; he had very little to keep him at home, and so long as that voluminous "*History of Suffolk*" was progressing satisfactorily it was all he had to trouble about. He had devoted years to this work; it was a creed with the old man to produce but one work—so that work be produced with care; and this History of his county is valued to this time as a standard work. To many it will be additionally valuable when they know that the Vicomte René de Chateaubriand hereon bestowed the labour of many days and nights.

One afternoon, writing in the study, he heard

the jog-trot of a pony and the roll of wheels upon the gravel in front of the house, followed by the stopping of an ancient barouche, the sound of which was familiar as an oft-heard song. It was the carriage of the vicar's old friend, Mr. Ives, rector of the adjoining parish, who had made the customary call after luncheon. René's heart beat quicker, as a blot of ink fell from the quill upon the zig-zag of penmanship, for M. le Vicomte Chateaubriand went "across country" behind his quill. His face flushed hot, and when a servant came and said he was wanted in the library, he had to stoop low to hide an embarrassment the menial mind would have accounted guilt. He drew his handsome self up quietly, but withal with quaking.

Mr. Ives had shown great regard for his friend's assistant. He had been taken by the nameless charm which won upon everybody. The blending of refinement, good breeding, and genius, accompanied by the grace of habitual serenity, quite stole upon the rector's heart, and he delighted to have the young man at his house, feeling, moreover that the several members of his family profited thereby. Anything more delightful than these informal reunions cannot well be conceived, and it never seemed to have occurred to the worthy divine that this sort of intimacy was attended with risk. The young people had been thrown together certainly, botanizing, wild-flower and fern gathering, sketching, geologizing, and the rest of pleasant country amusements, but then his beautiful daughter was a mere child, an ordinary pupil, with a governess yet at her pinafore-string, and the rector looked on it as rather a privilege, gaining this scholarly young tutor for nothing; why, he spoke languages without number, and there was nothing he did not know!

It was the old sweet legend of Abelard and Heloise repeated in its innocence, with occasional variations in favour of Paul and Virginia.

Then lo! Mademoiselle is seen in tears; and, being taxed, is found in love! A written story has been entrusted to her secret care, presumably for private study, it bears the startling title "ATALA."

Then a pretty set-out ensues at home, and all the blame, of course, falls sharp on that designing tutor: and the old pony is harnessed, and indignant ecclesiasticus goes rumbling in the old barouche, with her in mighty grief, over to the traitor's camp, there to bid farewell for ever.

Unaware of all there passing, Chateaubriand betook himself with deference to the library; light in the eye, love on the lips; to be chilled by the iciness of his reception. It flashed upon him in a moment, and he bowed with calm composure although the hands, wont to be extended with kindliest of greeting, were rigid and clenched. Having nought to be ashamed of, he who had been the soul of honour when with lovely Indian maidens whom he had rescued from captors, and travelled long leagues of lonely ways to restore to their people, now awaited any accusation calmly, since guiltless, he was fearless; but for his love's sake was tremulous. He was so unlearned in the frigid courtesies, his cool reception more surprised than overwhelmed him.

Then the aggrieved rector spoke, and by the measured emphasis, he knew that his dream was ended.

"So, young man, it seems, in spite of our good impressions, we are deceived in you after all! You have abused the confidence my friend and myself have placed in you. Taking mean advantage of being so much in the company of my dear daughter, you have won her young affections, and have lent her writings unfit for any pure-minded child's perusal—writings evidently prepared for the purpose, since in them you have profaned my daughter's graces. By thus insidiously winning my daughter's love you have compromised her peace of mind and the happiness of her family; you have, indeed, broken the unity of our household. But it is well you should know that this child of our affection is awakened in sufficient time to the treachery of which you have been guilty! I cannot tell the view my esteemed friend takes of your conduct, but allow me to say, sir, that in my eyes, and in the eyes of my family, you are disgraced irretrievably!"

René had never possessed excessive love for the English language; this tirade confirmed his distaste.

He looked in vain for a glance of sympathy from her. With that an encouragement he would have replied, with as straightforward decision and with addition of politeness. Her eyes were fixed painfully upon the carpet, he could see they were red with weeping, he could see her features wearing an expression of wounded pride. He looked the same instant over to where his patron and benefactor remained mute, nervously kicking at a hassock.

Only the rector spoke, looked; relentless, inexorable.

It was all very strange to him. These gentlemen were so different to the mild-eyed, soft-voiced Curé of St. Malo, who, even when he stole the apples, had kissed the beautiful boy face with never a chiding word; to the kindly Benedictines whose prior ever forgave so readily; it was all unlike; and yet, having found the world hard and bitter and cold in more lands than one, he met the trouble with dignity. Yet no incident of the Reign of Terror had more appalled him, not even on that day when he saw the Bastille stormed, not all the memorable service with Condé's army, not the siege of Thionville, where wounded he had fallen, one ideal form before his glazing eyes, that mystic name upon his heart—ATALA!

A side glance to her face again, with hungering hope of one faint look of love and pity. Not one. Cold as the rest! Then he said with charming simplicity,—

"I am sorry—I do not understand your country. I am unconscious of transgression—of breaking unity—of insidiously winning that which, if not bestowed spontaneously, is valueless. I will save you further anxiety, sir, by returning to the city from whence this noble and good benefactor did take me. To him my life's gratitude is due, to you my life's esteem; you will think better of this. Miss Ives, adieu! You will never be forgotten by René de Chateaubriand." Before they could interpose he had fallen upon one knee and imprinted a knightly kiss upon her hand, and he had quitted the chamber on the instant.

"Bless my soul! I saw him do it, and on my word I couldn't move a step to prevent it!"

Much flurried, the Vicar sank back in an easy chair, wiping his brow with his latest purchase

from the smugglers. Mr. Ives remained standing upon the hearth-rug, hands tightly clasped behind, for really this scene caused him more pain than it did any of the actors concerned. He had loved that misguided young man as his own son.

With hand on breast and bowing low, as he had bowed at the Court of Louis XVI., Chateaubriand retired.

His hat was hanging in the hall. He brought nothing, could take nothing. For the quiet mulberry suit he stood up in, and for the food supplied him since an inmate there, he had given more than equivalent.

So he passed forth from the home he had loved as he had loved none on earth, from the dark comfort and lettered dignity of the peaceful old study, his quill left upon the manuscript; even a word unfinished. From the sweet languor of the wilderness of bloom, for the life of him unable to pass those violets without stooping to one last waft of what seemed now an incense of pain.

"François! François!" It was the old clergyman trotting in and out amongst the beds, coming up with him by the garden-gate.

"Why, bless me, boy, what's all this tantrum? Who'd have thought you were in earnest? There's no necessity for this, it's all a mistake, and can be set right, when my friend is cool. I am sure, already, he shows signs of relenting; come back at once, there's a dear fellow."

But this was not in accordance with the chivalry of his order. Gracefully, and with a world of reverence in the action, he raised the pastor's hand to his lips. All the gratitude for all the happy months came out in that, and the old man was much moved, but vexed when he opened the gate to pass out.

"Bless me, sir! If we were all to be flying off at a tangent like this, what would the world come to? Just like your people, so impulsive and headstrong. But if you're bent on it, take this, forgotten in your hurry-skurry, and, please God, next time you come to Beccles you'll have found your reason! Adieu, my love goes with you."

Out of breath the pastor leaned against the wall, where in summer a trail of nectarines garnished the boundary of his enclosure. François had been standing with his hat raised, he fell upon one knee and seized the other's hand, crying passionately,—

"You do not know what I am suffering—do not entreat me to stay—God bless and reward you for all your goodness! Give me your blessing, father." Looking up in the old moist eyes below shaggy brows of whitest hair, with so wistfully yearning a gaze that the other bent on the instant, threw his arms about the slender neck, and blessed his friend with broken utterance.

Beyond, in the quiet of Suffolk lanes, with only the grazing cattle to witness his struggle, poor, sensitive, girlish, yet lion-proud Chateaubriand set between that too short period of his happiness and the strange unknown future, a face and a form that had been indelibly printed upon his heart, although not in the light of love—rather with that dim awe and idealism of worship his boyhood had experienced for his stately Queen.

It was the imposing presence of his vision of an instant, on that dreadful night in Drury Lane. Save only her name, he knew nothing of this gracious woman; but the instincts which come to

one in trouble told him she might prove his friend. He would seek her out, solicit her interest, she must have high influence; would, perhaps, obtain for him a position of trust, say as secretary to some gentleman, one who would be quick to appreciate such service as he could offer.

The young lambs came frisking almost to the stile whereon he was sitting, thinking out his plans. Birds were piping away in the afternoon sunshine from amongst the tender foliage. The moss seemed of a newer green, and the little springtide wild flowers of a fairness unknown before. Chateaubriand loved the spring; it was to him the charm-time of the year, his darling among the seasons. Summer was too sensuous, autumn too melancholy, winter too cruel; it was spring, with its sweet, fresh tenderness and innocent beauty, realized to a breath, to a hue, his joy amidst the days. Its keener air made him live; its fragrance was thrilling after the faint incense of dead autumn. This poet abhorred aught approaching to decay, save politics; to age, save architecture and maternity. Thus the reading of his *Mémoires d'outre Tombe* is wondrous sad.

René continued his way with the precious roll of manuscript he had been so often near to losing, yet looking back with an aching which was keener than this rude pen can well describe; and the thought of the one love of his life was the pain that endured for many a long year. As usual, he turned to *Atala* for comfort. In a wood, by a stream, sitting on a gnarled old tree-clump, with the moss and the wild growth thick about him, he unrolled the writing. *Atala* should comfort in this hour of his despondency. Spears of sunshine descended through the interlaced leaves, and lighted on the ideal of the ideal poem. That would never change; the *Atala* of his soul would be constant unto death.

A small parcel fell from the roll; it caused the tears to start in an instant, to be tossed with the tumble of curls from his bowed face. It was a supply of gold the thoughtful pastor had enclosed. He stooped to the stream, and dashed its sparkling coolness over his flushed face; then, setting his papers in order, commenced the pilgrimage to London.

The woodpecker, scared from its covert, peeped timidly forth at him; the kingfisher plumed its iris hues adown by the rushes in toy rivers over which he passed; the heron sprang from shadow of tawny old bridges, whereby generation after generation had gone to and from their scattered villages. Daisies seemed to watch so prettily his passing, he plucked a few and set them in the buttonhole of the mulberry coat. Orange-starred dandelions, golden centres of a wild-flower court, sunned their royal prosperity, flanked by a body-guard of dock leaves. Venerable spiders stepped gingerly between the prickles of the thistles, and dropped a line to some spruce nettle to ascertain if comfortable apartments were in season. Meadows were thick with buttercups, midst high grass of the early crop the hedges were a lace-work of tender-hued foliage; and the hazel, the elegance of woodland ways, tapered above him. By fields wearing brighter gold than corn, by white roads that recalled his native province, by tangled copses that revived memory of the intricate walls of forests passed in the great land

where he made his wild exploring quest for the North-West passage, that year when Washington took him by the hand, and his young life seemed full of promise.

A bonnie urchin, vestless, red cap on head, came running from a cottage door, and offered him a bunch of flowers. Years afterwards, this, faded, discoloured, a mystery to the people, occupied framed honour in a sumptuous palace.

The glow of red on the landscape flashed remembered glimpses of virgin forests before him, where the scarlet, snake-curved-like tendrils of the flowers, and the fierce tints of the flamingo sent flushes of colour round the dusky shores of embowered lakes. He saw again the trees towering a hundred feet or more, looped and garlanded with flowers, a mosaic of bloom, seeming to set the jewelled birds—the macaw, the parrot, the toucan, and the humming-bird—in a tapestry of gorgeous colour. He passed once more beneath the banana and the mangrove, the mighty mimosas and ceibas, the stately cecropie, with its palm-like, silvery leaves. The tamarinds and orange make the air heavy with perfume; the splendid bombax and brasilianni gleam upon the sight; the bamboo borders the path; cone-bearing giants scatter their offerings before him; the date, the cassia, and acacia fortalize the way; the plantain and the palm out-rear the gloom of forest twilight; it is spring again in dusky Indian woods. These thoughts beguile him of the tedium of his way, while evening creeps on apace, and he sees the twinkling lights of a village, where, if he be not plac'd in the stocks for a vagrant at large, he will pass the night, resuming his march at sunrise.

(To be concluded.)



"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELPTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.



CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTRODUCTION

"I THINK I am better, dear," returned Lady Mary, her voice gruff as the wolf's in Red Riding Hood, though it was kindly. "Who have you had, Cicely Devensey again? I don't like that girl, she is all for herself, a selfish girl. Mind she does not play you false, Edith! I thought she would never go!"

"You have been awake then," said Edith regretfully.

"Oh I couldn't sleep thinking about her—I wondered what she was gabbling about. Oh dear, what am I saying. She comes when I am alone; she makes me talk, and say a great lot more than I know I ought to say. Was that Dick Devensey? With all Dick's faults, he is worth a hundred of Cicely."

"No aunty, it was Mr. Pulsford, Dick did not come. Mr. Pulsford has taken Cicely home."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Mary, shaking her head

so condemningly, so dolorously that Edith could not forbear smiling. "Cicely came to be taken home, mark my words. If you do not have a care dear, Cicely will steal away your sweetheart. She would do so if she thought she could, and he were worth it. She would try."

"If he could be so easily taken away from me, aunty, would it be worth the endeavour to retain him?"

"I do not know, child," answered Lady Mary, with quavering voice, "but you know, when I am gone it would be much better for you were there someone to take care of you. It is much better to marry than remain single, as I have done. There is nothing but what is really commendable in Mr. Pulsford. The Dean says he is a most worthy young man, earnest as well as clever. He has quite altered those unruly boys. Dr. Olde will resign some day, and this young man will take his place; the salary is a good one, and Mr. Pulsford has already many pupils. That Cicely Devensey will be a wicked girl if she comes between you —"

Lady Mary was evidently exciting herself. Edith recollects that this was never the way of restoration. Lady Mary was to be kept quiet; here she was talking volubly.

"Hush, aunty dear, you will make yourself ill if you are not composed. I am not afraid of Cicely, and I do not wish to leave you. Take your medicine and try to sleep."

"I am getting old," sighed Lady Mary, "once I was young, now I am become quite a childish old woman—an old woman, dear. Perhaps it would have been better had I married when I was young. I used to think I was happier an old maid when I saw married women getting on so ill, careless husbands and long bills and unruly boys, but when I became older I used to envy the women with their children. Then you came to me dear, and how much brighter my life was from the day you came. I had someone to love. If it were not for you, if you had never come, should I not be lonely now? I should like you to marry, Edith —"

"Aunty, I would rather stay with you yet awhile."

"I think—I think," said Lady Mary faintly, "I am very unwell again. I ought to have taken my medicine sooner. It is not your fault—Edith—it was within reach—I can scarcely speak —"

Edith Heron was alarmed; her aunt looked so much like dying that the frightened girl ran to the stairs and cried out for Davison, then returned and raised the dear old head.

"We must have a doctor!" cried Edith breathlessly, fear and alarm exciting her. "Oh, Davison, she must not die!"

Davison was more calm and collected than Edith. "If you will go for a doctor, then, Miss Edith. She was like this in the afternoon, but not so bad. I will make Lady Mary easy until Dr. Devensey comes."

As Edith opened the house door she was conscious of someone approaching. She stood a second, feeling it was someone known to her, someone who would help her. Then she recognized Dick Devensey.

"Why, it is Dick, is it not?" she asked hurriedly, propriety forgotten. She did not often call him Dick to his face.

"Yes," answered Dick quickly, "is Cicely gone?"

"Oh, a long time. Oh, Dick, Dick, go for your father, aunty is ill, dying I believe; oh, do be quick!"

"He is not at home, nor Desforges," answered Dick aghast, "I've just come from home. Where has Cicely got to? What's to be done?"

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" cried Edith, in despair.

"Oh, there is Aylmer, he is at home. I will fetch him. What an ass I am not to think of him. I will be there in a moment or two."

"Any one, Dick, only pray hurry!"

Dick ran at full speed. She did not close the door, but waited and watched for Dick's return with Aylmer. Fearful she was of ascending the stairs, perhaps to confront the worst. The delay seemed horrible; Dick's moments went as hours, although her heart was telling her that Dick was a faithful fellow and would be expeditious, and Cicely scarcely worthy of such a generous brother. If Dick were only her brother, how proud she would be of him.

At last she heard someone coming quickly, not at a run as Dick had gone, but making all haste; then she could, she fancied, hear voices in a subdued key. She opened the door wide, and only saw Aylmer. He saluted her with a quick, grave inclination and looked towards the stairs. He placed his hat on the little table, and she went before him, and opening the chamber door, drew back to let him pass in.

She waited outside for a little time. She could hear Davison and Aylmer whispering. The tension was too great for her; she was at the point of pushing open the door, when Aylmer himself intercepted her.

"Do you think there is any danger?" asked Edith anxiously, looking up with tear-dimmed eyes into Aylmer's, which were grave, but grave from habit. At that moment he was a little preoccupied.

"I think you have no immediate cause for alarm," replied he slowly. "It is not paralysis. Has anything excited her?"

"She was awake and heard us talking below," said Edith; when I came upstairs she seemed much better, but she would talk. She talked until she was faint, it was all anxiety for me."

"Ah—I will go home and make up a little mixture, it will relieve and compose her. I can wait a little time after, I suppose, then I shall tell you exactly what you must do if the weakness occurs again. At Lady Mary Footitt's age, we must not be surprised if infirmities do begin to assert themselves. Do not be alarmed, Miss Heron."

"She has been so healthy always," said Edith Heron behind him. "I do not remember her to have ever had an attack like this before."

"I can tell she has a fine constitution. Still fine constitutions must in time become impaired. Do not be afraid: rest is the principal thing your aunt requires, and to be kept from excitement. Do not allow callers to worry her, then she will be out in a few days again."

"I will just put the chain on, Mr. Aylmer," said Edith. "Open the door and I shall hear you."

To Aylmer's surprise, Dick rose from an indolent attitude against the door, his hands deep down in his pockets, his hat over his eyes.

"Hullo, Aylmer!" exclaimed Dick in a low tone of voice. "I thought you were never coming out. I should have fallen asleep had I not been anxious about the poor old woman."

"Why did you wait for me? I thought you had gone home."

"Now, Tom, you couldn't have thought that of me. How is Lady Mary? You know I couldn't have gone home with it on my mind that the poor old lady was dying. People do get panics if there is anything unusual. Is she very ill?"

"She is; but in no great danger. Age is her malady, Dick. It is a disease that will reach us all. You do care something for Lady Mary, Dick?"

"Yes, for what she is, was, and has been. She used to tip me freely once in her day, although I believe she never had abundant faith in me. She used to pinch my ear, and tell me I should be hanged some day. A less charitable being than your humble servant might sanctimoniously prate of retribution. She has lectured me awfully at times, but if she lives won't I surprise her some day!"

"The veiled prophet!"

"Now, Tom, less of your sarcasm. I don't understand your allusions. All the fun of a joke is understanding it. I think one side of your head is a receptacle for sentiment and nonsense, and the other chokeful of science. No one would credit such a sober sides having such a delight in love tales and amorous rhymes."

"Pooh, Dick. How grievously you misunderstand me."

"Do I?—Aylmer, listen to me, now you have got your foot in the door—don't take it away until they promise to remove the chain. Don't withdraw it even when the fair one commences the operation; get a firmer foothold."

"Dick!" cried Aylmer, "what on earth do you mean?"

"Oh I can recite poetry!" answered Dick, mysteriously, and Dick commenced to whistle the air of a ditty, then recited in a whisper, an improvisation, a parody, a farrago of nonsense Aylmer would have it, although he could not help being amused.

There was a blind beggar had long lost his heart,
There was a fair maiden who took his part,
For many a vicious backbiter had he.

"I am the blind beggar—I have lost my heart, I gather that," said Aylmer; but what nonsense. You have often enough told me I have detractors, but I can fight my battles or go under. I do not wish any fair maiden to make herself enemies, whitewashing my imperfections——"

"How stupid a man can be when he determines beforehand to be stupid," answered Dick.

"Your pleasantry, Dick, is horribly ill-timed. How can you have the heart to lead off at such a time? Go home, Dick, it is late; you will be getting locked out for your pains and have the key of the street. I shall mix Lady Mary a sedative and return with it. I had no idea you were eaves-dropping."

"No, I won't go home until you have done. I will go and sit in your room until you return. I have an especial fondness for that 'snug' of yours. Not a room in our house furnishes me with such comfort, and—I may not always have such a retreat

—so many changes—I can see the future looming up—”

“ It is all rubbish, Dick. Moreover I do not care for such a tenant in my room when I am away. There is no telling what tricks will be played in my absence. Probably I shall be there some little time.”

“ Oh ! ” cried Dick, in the tone of a newly-awakened sleeper and burlesquing gravity, “ since we must part, I'll go Bail.”

“ Certainly. I do not wish you to go up to my house, it will be out of your way.”

“ Partant pour la Syrie
Le jeune et beau Dunois,”

hummed Dick as he passed under an ancient archway.

Aylmer laughed silently, a little pleasurable, as he proceeded on his way. He had had to assume a little impatience, but he was blessed with a proper sense of humour. If it pleased Dick to have such conceits, it did not hurt him. But the fellow had a wonderful perception. Aylmer questioned himself, was Dick Devensey far from the truth when he took such a shrewd view of a doctor's anxiety to be near his patient ?

“ In an hour I shall be able to satisfy myself,” soliloquized Aylmer, apologetically, to himself. He hesitated a moment before entering his surgery, looking at his own feeling more honestly. Why should he make such hypocritical excuses to himself ? Had he not for so long a time admired and sympathized with a young person of the opposite sex who had her battles to fight, and fought them bravely. He would have been content to see her lifted above her petty trials. He hung back because he was impressed with his own unworthiness, nay, his poverty was always rising up to confront him. It is not everyone who is so thin-skinned. In reality love is a selfish passion ; with the ordinary run of people the future counts for nothing : the lover is only bent upon restoring the balance of his equanimity, filling as it were, a certain uncomfortable vacuum. He had felt some repugnance to the natural course open to him, that of forcing an introduction ; he was averse to all incontinent obtrusiveness ; he must gain her favour smoothly and legitimately. Other men fell in love ; their system was hateful to contemplate, resorting, as they did, to extraordinary plans to further their suit—opposing rivals, breathing threatenings and slaughter with one breath, tender vows, constancy, devotion with another, and selfishly congratulating themselves on the progress they made. This was the course of true love, according to the world's dictum. Tom Aylmer sighed for a love's course, smooth as that of a brook's through a meadow. Because his own life had been uneventful, it seemed as if he wished to bring the passion of love into the same placid line. Here he was debating whether it were generous to push an insignificant fellow out, had he the opportunity.

“ Hang the fellow,” muttered he ; “ he is not worth consideration. Am I worth *her's* ? ” he debated a moment later. “ Ah, well, Tom Aylmer, you get strange ideas into your head. Supposing everything—suppose you had won your way to her heart, could you do better for her than this fellow will do, commonplace though he be ? ”

CHAPTER IX.

A SURPRISE.

AYLMER mixed his draught, no longer a victim to dreams. Fatal mistakes are made through people suffering their brains to go wool-gathering. After pulling himself together so sternly, he was a little self-satisfied to find himself so matter-of-fact. Aylmer built castles habitually, soliloquizing philosophically that where a man had no possible hope of a castle on *terra firma*, it would be a burning shame to deprive him of the illusory pleasure of building one in the air. It was not necessary to employ an architect, or take into consideration foundations. If a celestial castle were razed or it melted into thin vapour it was an easy matter to Poe-sise and erect another on the same site for there was no question of cost. He had builded a great number ; at one time his castle had been increasing and remunerative practice, the ruins remained, now and again he added a turret, but too often his dismantled castle tottered and crumbled, whereat he laughed with a grim humour. The castle he had loved to raise latterly was an airy and delicate structure ; now when it seemed as if he might bring it to the semblance of a reality, he hesitated to follow up his advantage.

“ Why need I stay at all,” mused he ; “ the old lady will come on all right I know. Devensey will have got home, she belongs to him. Perhaps Devensey will be hipped as it is, he will profess his thankfulness that I was within call, but I know he will be desperately jealous.”

“ You have not been long,” said Edith Heron gratefully ; “ and it is some distance to your house.” This was sufficient recompense to Aylmer, hearing the sweet voice restored to calmness. “ I did not know Richard Devensey was outside waiting for you. How fortunate I have been this night, Mr. Aylmer.”

“ I did not expect Devensey would wait for me, but he was anxious to have my report of Lady Mary Footitt. He accompanied me part of my way, he hurried me along.”

“ Why could he not have come in I wonder. I must tell my aunt of the good fellow's thoughtfulness for her, for you must know Mr. Aylmer aunty picks quarrels with him and tells him he is graceless.”

“ You think then, Miss Heron, you will influence your aunt so that she will be a little more lenient with Devensey ? ”

“ No doubt she will be a little touched to hear of Richard Devensey's anxiety concerning her.”

Aylmer sighed despondently, if he could only influence the aunt to regard him favourably, in time to come, but pshaw—

“ And if Devensey has interest, on your part it is devotion—”

“ It is only my duty, Mr. Aylmer. She is the only friend I have in the world, the only friend I ever had, I think. When I lose her whom shall I have ? If I lost her now—I cannot bring myself to think of it.”

“ You can never be destitute of friends, Miss Heron, I think you might command them.”

Edith moved aside, shaking her head.

“ I have no right to complain,” she said ; “ I must fight my own battles. All those who have been so good and kind to my dear aunt will of

course think I am young and able to meet the world. I have no right to think the friends I have will fall away from me. But what have I done to ensure the constancy of friends? Nothing—sometimes I must confess I am afraid—”

“Afraid, Miss Heron? Oh, you must never lose heart; we cannot always expect smooth sailing. I have experienced boisterous weather, perhaps then I had not the stoutest heart, but it is surprising the courage one acquires.”

“You would make a despairing heart hopeful,” answered Edith Heron with a faint smile; “but my fear was not for the difficulties I should have to contend with; it was for those moments looking back—they will occur to us—the thought of the past; at those times I think I should break down. I often have wished I had been a man,” her smile changing to a little forced laugh, a little modest colour showing how timidly she advanced such a thought; “a man is in so much better a position than a woman.”

“That is quite true. Still, do you think it wise to anticipate so much. Is it not better, think you, to live more in the present—to wait with patience and trust? Perhaps good fortune is ahead.”

“You are very sanguine for me, Mr. Aylmer—”

“Yes, I am,” said Aylmer boldly. “Pardon me, I believe you have undeniable qualities”—Aylmer said this with an air of faith, forgetting himself in the enthusiasm which sometimes carries away the most calm and collected. He was so earnest, if he noticed her countenance change, it was only to regard her smile as an acknowledgment for his appreciation.

The slightest glance and Aylmer would have gone further; perhaps had she spoken, he would have unbosomed himself, and told her of all his own difficulties and drawbacks, and invited her sympathy.

“But,” said Aylmer with a change of voice, the tone striking himself even as with a chill, “perhaps I am keeping you up late. If you would not mind sending your servant into your aunt’s room—to let me know if Lady Mary is sleeping—that will be all that is necessary. Dr. Devensey or Dr. Desforges will look in in the morning.”

“Will you not look in, Mr. Aylmer?”

“I scarcely know whether I should,” demurred he.

“Professional etiquette?” replied she with acute comprehension.

“Well, yes, that has something to do with it,” said he, smiling.

“I wish I could stay with her to-morrow,” murmured Edith.

“Mrs. Pomfret will no doubt excuse you.”

“She would were I to ask her. I may get away early in the day. I shall certainly come away early, but if you think my aunt is not in danger I must go.”

“There is no cause for alarm, Miss Heron, I assure you. I shall call in and see Dr. Desforges on my way home; he will see that Lady Mary is looked after.”

“And I can come away at noon. I can come through the cloisters and out at the western door; it is no great distance. The door in the Galilee Porch is always open for the Dean and the Precentor.”

Davison tapped at the door, opened it, and spoke without.

“Lady Mary is sleeping very nicely, missy. Shall I be wanted any more below, Miss Edith?”

“No. You can put up the little bed,” Edith said. “I will sleep in aunty’s room to-night.”

“I thought, missy, I would sleep in her room?”

“Oh, I will sleep there Davison, thank you; that will be all I think.”

“I think I can wish you good-night,” Aylmer was saying when Edith interrupted him.

“There is some one outside; I heard a tap,” whispered she timidly. “I am quite nervous. Whoever it is, it is some one thoughtful enough not to raise the knocker. Davison, will you open the door? Oh, it is Dr. Devensey!” cried Edith.

“Oh,” said the old doctor, hopping into the room—“ah—hum, hum—I thought I had better come. Aylmer, how d’do? How is Lady Mary?—better I hope. I knew, if you were here or had been here, everything would be all right; but as soon as I could get at liberty I felt I must run down; so old a friend as dear Lady Mary, I felt I could not sleep unless I did. Desforges and I wasted a few moments in argument as to who should come. But I insisted—yes, insisted. Oh, Miss Heron, I know your dear aunt will be well cared for. But how is Lady Mary?”

“She is asleep now, Dr. Devensey,” said Edith, “I am sure I am very thankful Mr. Aylmer was within call.”

“Yes, yes, very good thing, very good thing.”

“You would like to see her, Dr. Devensey?”

“Ah! no, no, that is quite unnecessary if Aylmer has been up. Suppose I look in with Aylmer in the morning, eh?”

“I think it will be unnecessary for me to come, doctor, if you can make it convenient,” dissented Aylmer.

“Miss Edith,” said the ubiquitous Davison outside the door, “I have been very careful not to make any noise, but Lady Mary is awake now, and has asked for you.”

“You will excuse me a moment,” pleaded Edith.

“Certainly,” replied Doctor Devensey, with a bow.

Edith followed Davison up the stairs.

Lady Mary’s eyes were upon her niece the moment she entered the bedroom.

“Edith,” began Lady Mary, “whom have you below?”

“Dr. Devensey, aunty.”

“I have been poorly, then—yes, I must have been. Dear, I must have been dreaming. I thought Aubrey Aylmer had been to see me, his voice—I could have been positive of his voice, but of course it was all a delusion. He has not been in Treminster for years—how strange one’s head should be so weak. I am an old woman and I thought I was young again—”

“You are not to talk, dear aunt, you are to lie still and sleep if you can.”

“Was it necessary, dear, to call in a doctor? I am an old woman, all the doctors in the world cannot make me young again.”

“May I leave you, aunt, Dr. Devensey will be waiting?”

“Yes, child, Let old Devensey get off to bed.

He won't care to be kept up I know. I do feel sleepy myself."

Edith went down to the two men.

"Aunty appears to be much better; she says she is quite sleepy again, and she is generally a very light sleeper."

"Oh, Aylmer, wait for me; I want your company," cried Dr. Devensey, imagining his compatriot about to depart. "I have something to say to you as we go home."

"I am at your service," said Aylmer, shrewdly guessing the topic—it would be something relating to Dick—perhaps a remonstrance, perhaps the old fellow was stupid enough to think he was an aider and abettor in Dick's villainies, in his idleness, procrastination, and carelessness. Aylmer agreed to walk home with Devensey, but he was never prodigal of his words with some people.

The old doctor hummed and hawed his leave-taking, but as the two gentlemen passed out there was a look in Edith's eyes Aylmer believed was meant only for him. He felt he had won one step in her regard; he was assured that he had gained her good will and respect. Aylmer was not an egoist, but he had opinions, one, that he was worth much more appreciation than he got. He believed that Edith Heron discerned he was not the sour hermit of public opinion; this was sufficient recompence and encouragement for him. At the same moment it occurred to him that he had only just become known to her; he never gave her credit for having formed an opinion of him before, for having more than a passing thought for him. He did not divine that she had long exalted him as one of the heroes who live in the world, the world knowing them not. Hope cheered him in spite of his prudent desire to check his sanguine faith. Let him beat down conviction as he would, he could not help feeling happier, and if he had been sedate all his life, he knew he had never been an unhappy man. Love gilds the sunless life, love has faith that cannot be denied, vistas of groves elysian, sounds of trickling water, a sense of balmy air, and solaceful peace permeate the dreams of the enraptured lover. Aylmer certainly listened to old Devensey; gathered that Dick had long been a cause of parental anxiety, also that the father never doubted for a moment that his companion would aid him to influence the recreant son to take a more serious view of himself and friends. Aylmer answered rationally and seriously enough, but his heart was away and his eyes far ahead. Before them walked a lady and her escort; he would have thought little of this, but the lady hesitated at Dr. Devensey's door, then, apparently conscious that she was observed, passed on, turning round the house end and so up the carriage-way. Aylmer noticed her escort seemed to hurry away; evidently there was a mystery. It might have been a servant prolonging her evening out, but then a servant was scarcely likely to enter a gentleman's house by the hall door. Old Devensey was so engrossed in his subject it was plain to Aylmer he had not been observant, but Tom did not think it worth his while to call the old man's attention to this contretemps. After all it might be but a trivial matter.

"Good night, Aylmer," said Devensey.

There was a tinge of reproach in the old man's voice, as if he had a suspicion that, after all, he

had had but an indifferent listener. "You will do what you can to influence my son; I shall quite reckon upon you."

"My dear sir," said Aylmer, a little self-reproachful, anxious to remove any ill impression he might have raised by involuntary inattention, "I have had conversations with your son; I think he is in earnest now. He is really too despondent; that, I believe, goes far to make him reckless. I think he will try this time to please you. You may rest assured, Dr. Devensey, he will have nothing but good counsel from me. I will speak to him again. Good-night, Dr. Devensey."

Aylmer shook hands hurriedly. He was feverishly desirous to overtake the person ahead of him. A faint suspicion that the *au revoir* was not *au couleur de rose* urged Aylmer to discover the unknown cavalier. At last it occurred to Aylmer that the person before him was uneasy at being followed, for he also quickened his pace. But Aylmer was a pedestrian from practice, if not from choice, and he was a determined and persistent fellow when his curiosity was aroused. No man in the world was more disposed to take infinite trouble to solve a mystery. He only felt satisfied when he was gaining ground.

Reaching the Bail, the mysterious being seemed disposed to reach the cathedral as if desirous to lose himself in the shadows.

Aylmer had come out of his way to humour old Devensey; his leader had led him deviously into the neighbourhood of Lady Mary Footitt's house again. That was of little consequence to Aylmer when his head was full of a suspicion and he was determined to solve a mystery. Aylmer became more curious still when his man, after reaching the western front, paused for a moment and tried the gate in the paliades. He knew that he was followed, and wished to escape. Aylmer reasoned if this man had nothing to be ashamed of, he need not be afraid of showing his face. Aylmer began to feel now as if he knew his man.

The gate was fast, and with a hurried glance in Aylmer's direction, the pursued walked a few paces along the pavement, then crossed the road, and doubled.

"Capital!" thought Tom; "it will be the easiest thing in the world for me to describe a curve and intercept you at the Exchequer gate."

This was what Aylmer contrived to do. They arrived at a point almost simultaneously, directly under the lamp which illuminated the archway. Its light revealed the discomfited features of Pulsford the organist.

Aylmer felt disappointed. What had the fellow to be afraid of? His shrinking face and figure implied a sense of shame. A feeling of contempt possessed Aylmer. A fellow not courageous enough to bear looking at! What occasion had he for confusion? Aylmer felt his contempt increase.

"Is it gallantry with a maid-servant? Perhaps he is afraid of it coming to her ears; and it ought to do, if it is so. Still, he is not a fellow likely to commit himself in such a way—the least likely. He is one of those fellows who take care to know what they are about. He would toady to a superior,

be insolent where he could, or be afraid of being civil. He is not a gentleman, so cannot afford to treat everyone with deference and respect."

He allowed Pulsford to lead again. Aylmer had gained his point overtaking him, yet Aylmer's curiosity was not yet quenched. He could only conjecture. There had been a rendezvous—with whom? The lady had not the bearing of a servant, much as the servant affects the mistress. Something in the carriage and figure seemed familiar to him. He went over the evening's events. Dick had stayed late at "Bachelor's Hall," had suddenly returned to summon him to Lady Mary Footitt's. Had Cicely been there when Dick first left his house, she would have been there when he, Aylmer, got there. No, Cicely had grown impatient—had gone home unescorted. Aylmer started—was the lady Cicely Devensey? Had Pulsford escorted her home? But then there had been a long interval between the time of his first journey to Lady Mary's and coming away the second journey. Cicely was a prude, she would be the first person to hold up her hands in depreciation at any striking departure from prescribed morals; a lady having an appointment with a gentleman at such an hour—words would fail her to express her sense of condemnation. But this would scarcely be an appointment, it was only a common act of politeness stretched to its utmost limit. Cicely had the forehead of a casuist, thought Aylmer. Wise in his generation, he would not imagine that Cicely was other than human; he well knew that the over righteous are often the first to transgress when tempted, or when opportunity offers. It was hard to credit her with the worst, she would never try to tamper with Edith Heron's lover; her attachment to her friend would forbid that—her pride. Still, it had an ugly look. The fellow, were it so, was uncomfortable about it. Aylmer's mind recalled Dick Devensey's comments on the evenings spent at Lady Mary's; he could not recollect that Dick had ever noted any cordial feeling existing between Pulsford and his sister. Was Cicely artful? throwing dust in Dick's eyes; under the guise of friendship for Edith Heron laying her plans, determined to steal away Edith Heron's lover. Something else struck him suddenly, Cicely Devensey had money—he fancied he saw it all. She had acquainted Pulsford and he was wavering, troubled, not knowing how to retire with honour. No servant would have made for old Devensey's front entrance. It was clear as daylight they had prolonged their walk, convinced that they would escape detection. Aylmer felt confident Pulsford was entrapped, and, with a low laugh to himself, he wished the fellow joy.

(To be continued.)

AUTOGRAPHS.

NAMES are
Echoes of great events—challenge notes
Of retiring armies, glorified by victory,
The roll-call of soldiers who fought,
And died to crown the world
With immortal triumph.
And here are those who fell
Storming the grim dark holds of evil
In their awful power.

And others that glitter as the
Central jewel in a royal diadem,
Priceless—peerless.

Anon we pause o'er
The cramped cypher of a hand
Whose deeds and words glisten
In the record of the age,
Like a solitary star in a rift cloud
Of night's deep blackness.
And the fierce rage of human cruelty
Pale before their rising glory!

And here are words, that like
Whispered cadence breathed in mortal ears
'Midst the soul's thrall—a celestial
Lullaby!—Like distant thunder, that
Doth proclaim the coming tempest:
The upheaval from castellated cells
And made enthroned tyrants tremble.

And here, too, are names of vast renown,
The martyrs fallen in ensanguined fields,
Dying in the struggle for Truth and Right.
Brave warriors! whose blood
Consecrates the torch borne aloft to-day
By Liberty's fair hand, whose flame
Enlightens the nations of the world.
Hallowed names, that shine in human
History, cherished in all hearts with
Love's tender reverence and pity—the
Saviour Heroes of the race.

Aye! great names, and good
As great. And we halt in the world's march,
Not sorrowing, as before their tombs and
Buried ashes; but honouring their
Deathless memories. Grand Heroes!
Who, while the race shall live, will
Reign immortal and supreme, till
The last page of the world's
History is written.

REV. EDWARD F. STRICKLAND, U.S.

CURIOSITIES OF SMOKING.

IN 1787 Mrs. Barbauld, of "Evenings at Home" celebrity, in a letter to her brother, Dr. Aiken, asks him if he had ever seen "seguars, leaf-tobacco, rolled up of the length of one's finger which they light and smoke without a pipe." This question points pretty conclusively to the date of the introduction of the cigar into England. Yet the cigar is far more ancient than the pipe, unless we accept the Irish legend which asserts that in the helmet of one of the statues of an early Irish king is stuck a small pipe exactly resembling the "dudheen" that a modern Irishman occasionally wears in the band of his felt hat. Still, if his Hibernian majesty did smoke, it was not tobacco, so the argument goes for nothing.

Fifty years after Columbus landed at San Salvador, Girolamo Benzoni, in his *History of the New World*, writing of the Mexicans, says:—"When the tobacco leaves were in season they picked them, tied them in bunches, and dried them near the fire. Then they took maize leaves, rolled them full of tobacco, and lighted them at one end, putting the other in their mouths. They drew the smoke up into their throats and heads, finding a pleasure in retaining the smoke until they lost their reason. Some would take so much

of it that they would fall down as if dead, remaining many hours insensible. Wise men only inhaled enough of the smoke to make themselves giddy."

Tobacco had been cultivated by the Spaniards in Cuba, and by the Portuguese in Brazil, when Jean Nicot, who was destined to give his name to the plant, being on a mission in Portugal about the year 1560, sent seeds to Catherine de Medicis, from whom it took the name of "Herbe de la Reine," by which it was long known in France. In 1584 Raleigh's agents discovered Virginia, and introduced the Virginian weed into this country, where it soon became the fashion, though not without bitter opposition.

The plays of the Elizabethan dramatists, especially those of Ben Jonson, abound in allusions to tobacco and the fantastic usages of the smokers. Smoking at that period was regarded as a fine art, and teachers were engaged to impart its elegancies. Shift, in *Every Man out of his Humour*, undertakes to instruct young gentlemen "in the most gentlemanlike use of tobacco; as first to give it the most exquisite perfume; then to know all the delicate, sweet forms for the assumption of it; as also the rare corollary and practice of the Cuban ebolition, euripus, and whiff, which he shall receive, or take in here at London, and evaporate at Uxbridge, or farther, if it please him." The *Gull's Hornbook* says:—"Then let him shew his several tricks in taking the whiffe, the ring, etc., for these are compliments that gain gentlemen no mean respect; and for which indeed they are more worthily noticed than for any skill they have in learning."

The Cuban, or Gulan, ebolito was a mode of forcibly and rapidly ejecting the smoke; the euripus—a word supposed to have been suggested by the strait so called that lies between the island of Cuba and the Continent, proverbial for the flux and reflux of the tide—indicated an inhalation and emission of the smoke in rapid succession; the whiff was the act of holding the smoke in the mouth, and breathing and speaking without emitting it; the ring is a trick still frequently practised by smokers. The shops of tobacconists, or druggists, as they were called, not only supplied the tobacco, but all the conveniences for drinking it, as the phrase went. Every well frequented shop was an academy of "the noble art," where professors regularly attended to initiate the country aspirants. Abel Drugger, in the *Alchemist*, boasts that his shop has its maple block, its silver tongs, its Winchester pipe, and fire of juniper, and he kept his tobacco in "fine lily pots that, opened, smell like conserve of roses or French beans." Upon the maple block the leaves were shredded; the silver tongs were for holding the coal or fire juniper, this wood being preferred, because when once kindled it seldom or ever went out.

The devotees of tobacco accredited it with all kinds of virtues. Bobadil, in *Every Man in his Humour*, protests that in India, he and a dozen others never received the taste of any other nutriment in the world for the space of one and twenty weeks, "but the fume of this simple only; therefore it cannot be but most divine . . . I could say what I know of the virtue of it for the expulsion of rheums, raw humours, crudities, obstructions, with a thousand of this kind. I do hold it

to be the most sovereign and precious weed that ever the earth tendered to the use of man." Fagon, the physician of Louis XIV., was scarcely less emphatic in its praise; used with judgment and moderation, he considered it might "justly claim precedence of all the other remedies;" that it had all the qualities of Homer's nepenthes, as it makes us forget the cares of life, and even supplies the want of victuals. On the other hand, its opponents were equally dogmatic. Every one has heard of James I.'s *Counterblast*, but other rulers went much farther in their hatred of tobacco, though it was rather directed against it in the form of snuff than of smoking. Mahomed IV. and the Grand Duke of Muscovy inflicted the penalty of death upon snuff-takers; the King of Persia cut off their noses; Pope Urban VIII. excommunicated them. It was said that snuff dried up the brain, so that only a little black lump was found after death in the skulls of the takers. Equally absurd were the stories told of the evil effects of smoking. Cob, in the play already quoted, *Every Man in his Humour*, says: "It's good for nothing but to fill a man full of smoke and embers; there were four died out of one house last week with taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight; one of them they say will never 'scape it; he voided a bushel of soot yesterday." Persons of a serious cast of mind denounced it as "a pestiferous and wicked poison from the devil."

Pipes were sometimes made of silver, sometimes formed of a walnut shell, and also of clay. The most fashionable form was called "the woodcock's head," though the bowls of many were similar in shape to those now in use; in William III.'s reign, the bowls were sometimes of brass and iron. For examples of magnificent and curious pipes, however, we must go to the East. The collection of one of the Turkish pashas was said to have been worth £30,000. The diamonds that decorated a single pipe of one of the Viceroys of Egypt were reported to be worth £3,000. Among such potentates it was not unusual to see, besides rings of large diamonds round the amber mouth-piece, tassels of the same precious stones suspended from the stem. These chibouks, however, were produced only on state occasions. In China, where every man and woman smokes, the pipes are long, light, delicate tubes, with bowls scarcely larger than sparrows' eggs, and seldom ornamented; into these is pressed a bright yellow tobacco, cut into very small shreds. In the opium pipe the bowl is in the centre and extremely small, as the quantity of the narcotic used at a time is so very minute that it is exhausted in three whiffs.

The most deadly form of smoking is that of the hashish, a species of tobacco derived from hemp-seed; it produces delirium and homicidal mania. It was after inhaling this potent stimulant that the Malay used to run-a-muck; maddened by its fumes, he would draw his knife, rush through the streets, and stab at every one he met. Such are a few of the curiosities connected with one of the most remarkable habits of man.

H. BARTON BAKER.

A MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY H. E. CLARKE.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.

"JUST the same as ever, Jack," exclaimed the sun-burned young fellow, dropping into a chair. "Seven years ago I said good-bye to you in this very room—you were sitting at that very desk—and, by Jove, I believe you were writing that very letter."

"No," said John Huntley, laying down his pen with a smile, "I have finished that letter and one or two more since I saw you."

"Ah, yes," replied the other nodding, "they tell me you are doing a tremendous business, Jack; making no end of money, and all that."

"People generally talk most of what they know least about," remarked Huntley tranquilly; "but I am doing very well."

"You have many more clerks in your front office," said the visitor. "But I wonder you don't go into bigger and more central offices—or, at least, I should wonder if you were anybody but John Huntley."

"I don't see the good of spending money in display," returned Huntley. "The work gets done here just as well as it would in a palace, and that is all I care about."

Fred Boyle shrugged his shoulders as who should say within himself that there is indeed no accounting for tastes, and then changed the subject.

"I've been having a high old time, Jack," he said. "While you have been slaving in this dingy court, I've been all over the habitable globe. I've shot tigers in India, alligators on the Nile, Indians in America, brigands in Greece. I'm President of a South American Republic, of which I've forgotten the name for the moment; I've been through Australia with an exploring expedition which discovered absolutely nothing, but most of the fellows died from exhaustion, so it was considered very creditable to the survivors. I edited a paper out West, until they burnt my office, broke up my press, and tarred and feathered my sub.; I tried to cross the Atlantic in an open boat, and was rescued, as the Yankee papers said, 'in a frightfully exhausted condition.' That's life, you know, Jack—this is merely vegetating."

Huntley smiled an enigmatic smile, and made no reply.

"But now," continued the other after a pause, "that sort of thing is all over. The governor says I must marry and settle down, and as he won't allow me enough money to amuse myself with any longer, I suppose I must do it."

"Have you arranged whom you are going to marry?" asked Huntley.

"Yes," replied Boyle, brushing his hat with his coat-sleeve, and observing the effect critically. "That part of it bothered me for some time, but last night I was introduced to a lovely American heiress, worth a perfectly fabulous number of dollars, and I have decided that I will marry her.

All the men are crazed about her. There was Tudor Bingham, the poet; you have heard of him, of course?"

"Never," said Huntley.

"Oh, Bingham's a very distinguished man," said Boyle.

"And there was Foljambe, the painter;—ever hear of Foljambe?"

Huntley shook his head.

"I thought everybody knew Foljambe," remarked Boyle in surprise. "He's a more distinguished man than Bingham. And then there was Courtney; of course, everybody knows Courtney."

"But I don't," said Huntley.

"Bless my soul," cried Boyle, "what an extraordinary thing! Why, Courtney is the most distinguished man of the three."

"In what particular line is the great Courtney distinguished?" asked Huntley.

"Oh," replied Boyle vaguely, "he's distinguished in a general sort of way; he knows everybody and everything, I believe. And then he is negatively so distinguished. He doesn't sing or play, he doesn't write, he doesn't paint—"

"What a singular man!" cried Huntley, rubbing his hands; "I think I should like Courtney."

"—But he's the greatest living authority on literature, painting, singing, and music," continued Boyle impressively.

"Oh—ah," said Huntley in a tone of disappointment. "He's not singular after all, then. He's as bad as the others. And all these men are after your American heiress, are they? Poor girl! I pity her. By-the-way, what did you say her name was?"

"I didn't say," replied Boyle, "but it's Rose Chapman."

"That's odd," said Huntley, searching a pigeon-hole in the desk before him, and taking a paper therefrom. "Two or three days ago my New York correspondents, West & Co., wrote advising me that they had given a letter of introduction to me to a Miss—yes, it's the same name—Rose Chapman—and asking me to supply the young lady with funds during her stay in England. I expect to see her in a day or two at latest."

As he spoke there was a knock at the door, and a clerk appeared, bearing a card.

"And curiously enough, here she is," he continued, glancing at it. "Say I shall be disengaged in a few minutes, Davis."

"Well, I'll go," said Boyle. "And I'll go by your private door, because I don't want to meet her now. You must tell me what you think of her when I see you next. And remember, I have decided to marry her within the next year."

Boyle having departed, Huntley touched the button of an electric bell.

"Have this letter copied and sent off at once," he said to the clerk, who instantly answered the summons, "let some one go on to Baker & Co., and say I have chartered a vessel for the deal cargo;—tell Green I shall want to examine the voyage account of the *Bride of Corinth* this afternoon;—telegraph to Smith & Co. of Dundee for present prices of corn sacks;—and, Davis, hold yourself in ready."

ness to take down a few letters from dictation directly I ring. Now show Miss Chapman in."

To Huntley's surprise, two ladies appeared instead of one, and the elder of them, a portly matron of middle age, at once came towards him, holding out her hand, and saying—

"My dear Mr. Huntley, is it not the oddest chance that fate should throw us together again after all these years? This is my dear friend Miss Chapman, who is at present staying with us at Skelton House. When she told me yesterday that she had a letter of introduction to you, I was quite dumfounded—was I not, dear? And so I determined I would drive her down, and take the opportunity of seeing if you had quite forgotten me."

Huntley did and said all that could be expected of him in a tranquil, brief, business-like way, and in a quarter of an hour was escorting the ladies to their carriage.

As she was about to step in Mrs. Golightly emitted a small shriek, and exclaimed—

"There, I had nearly forgotten the most important thing of all!"—saying which she proceeded to extract a large card from the gold-mounted reticule she carried, and to hand it to Huntley with great solemnity.

"Let us hope that we may see you once or twice during the season, at any rate," she said. "We are at home every Wednesday evening at nine o'clock, and you will meet some most distinguished people. Do come. I know how busy you are, but you can surely spare one or two evenings for old friends?"

The carriage drove away, and Huntley was left standing in the street with Mrs. Golightly's "at home" card in his hand, and a vision of an exquisitely dressed and extremely beautiful young lady in his mind.

"It is a pity," he said to himself, as he put the card into his pocket, "that she has fallen in that fool of a woman's set of second-rate dilettanti. However, it's no business of mine." So saying, he went back to his desk, where for the next hour he dictated letters to his shorthand clerk; and after that until six o'clock he was merely an intelligent machine engaged in the swift transaction of all sorts of business that can come in a prosperous London merchant's way, and there are surprisingly few sorts that cannot. At six he locked his desk, put on his hat, said good-night to his clerks, and started for Kensington. And it was not until the sulphureous gloom of the Metropolitan Railway had enveloped him that he found time to reflect upon the visit he had received in the morning. He thought Miss Chapman decidedly handsome, he dwelt with satisfaction upon his recollection of her imperious lips, exquisite complexion, and bright gold hair, bound tightly round the small well-set head. But he was past the impressionable age, and curious as it may seem to the youthful reader, Mrs. Golightly was the central object of his reflections. Her visit was not unpleasant to him, for it was an official admission not to be gainsaid that he had re-conquered his position in society.

Ten years before, his father had lost it by his bankruptcy—a bankruptcy brought about, not by fraud, but by negligence and incompetence, so marked that he could not be said to come out of the ordeal scathless, and since that time John

Huntley's life had been "a battle grim and great." His father never recovered from the shock of his failure, and died within a year. John set himself to save from the wreck enough to keep his mother, his sister and himself; that was the most he had hoped for when he began, and in ten arduous years he had made the business more prosperous than ever, and had paid off beside every penny of his father's old debts. It was a marvellous achievement, and the man who had performed it was quite ready to admit to himself (and to others he never mentioned the subject) that he had enjoyed exceptional opportunities, and that fortune had smiled upon him.

He was about thirty-seven now, and in all the ten years he had only taken two holidays of a fortnight each, and what this wonderful world calls "pleasure" was practically unknown to him. But he had perfect health, and an insatiable appetite for work of all sorts, the gratifying of which was a pleasure in itself. He read much in his short intervals of leisure, and as he read because he liked it, and not because he wanted to show off at afternoon teas, he gradually acquired a knowledge of books that did not seldom astonish those pretentious impostors known amongst their un-literary friends as "awfully well read, don't you know?" Thus he had spent the ten years, carefully eschewing "society" and all its vanities, living quietly first at Highgate, and then as quietly at Kensington, with his mother and sister. And Mrs. Golightly, who had known them well enough before the crash came, was the first to tempt him back into the old paths.

He thought it all over quietly, and when he left the train at Kensington his mind was made up. "I'm too old for this sort of thing," he said to himself, "it would only bore me to death. I shall not go."

But Boyle dined with him a few nights after, and when the ladies were gone, and cigars had been lighted, he reverted to Miss Chapman. Was she not lovely? Had she not wonderful eyes, and the sweetest voice ever heard? And the panther-like grace of her movements —

"The what grace?" asked Huntley, opening his eyes. "Panther-like? Nonsense! A panther slinks about like the treacherous brute he is. She doesn't; she walks like a lady."

"Bingham says she's panther-like," said Boyle. "he's written a poem in which he speaks of her as his panther."

"The deuce he has!" exclaimed Huntley. "Now, if I were going to marry the young lady—as you are—I should commence operations by punching Bingham's head."

"I did think about it," said Boyle, "but they tell me that it's not to be thought of. As long as it's in verse it's all right, and he may say what he pleases. It seems odd, but I have it on the best authority."

Huntley's lip curled, but he was silent.

"Why didn't you come to Mrs. Golightly's on Wednesday night?" asked the other, after a pause. "The old lady was awfully disappointed; she was looking out for you all the evening."

Huntley remarked that the entertainment was not much in his way, and then inquired how the courting of Miss Chapman had progressed.

"Splendidly!" replied Boyle, with great satisfaction. "I guess I've got the bulge on most of

the boys now. I got to know that she had been to Foljambe's studio, and that Bingham had been sending her his poems, and I was afraid I might be left in the lurch if I didn't make an effort; so I spread a report that while in Africa I had been driven by famine to kill and eat one of my attendants. That did the trick. She inquired of several people if they thought it was true, and when I came in I could see she was all curiosity. I can tell you there was only one man in it for the rest of the evening. She kept asking me leading questions, too, such as 'Did you ever suffer from thirst?—or—or hunger?'—'Did any of your party die?'—and so on. And I flatter myself my replies were models in the art of mystification. I've done very well so far, but I'm afraid she may be offended when she comes to know the story isn't true."

"But surely," said Huntley, "you don't suppose a woman is likely to be captivated by such a revolting thing as that? I should have thought it would have shocked her beyond expression."

Boyle laughed. "You know more about business than I do, Jack," he said, "but I'm better acquainted with the sex. Shocked! Of course—they love being shocked. Bingham writes poems to shock them, Foljambe paints hideous pictures to shock them, and that's what makes the fellows so popular. But I flatter myself cannibalism will take the wind out of their sails for awhile."

Somehow, after this conversation Huntley's thoughts turned once or twice to Mrs. Golightly's Wednesday evenings. If Boyle told the truth there must be a strange set of idiots to be seen there, and he had a kindly Shakespearian relish for a born fool who has cultivated his gifts. He thought after all it might amuse him to see these grotesque imbeciles posing before Miss Chapman, and at length he decided that he would go. He did not think the beautiful American had anything more than this to do with his decision, but he may possibly have deceived himself.

However that may be, on the next Wednesday evening he found himself in Mrs. Golightly's hot and crowded rooms, and after receiving an effusive welcome from the hostess, he was introduced to a young lady, whose name of course he did not hear, and who asked him with breathless eagerness if he did not agree with Schopenhauer and Hartmann in their views of life? He replied that he knew very little about these views. Perhaps his companion could give him a brief outline.

"You know, they are optimists—or is it pessimists?—one of the two, I forget which," said the young lady, rapidly. "And—oh, dear! there is someone whom I must speak to if you will excuse me," and she vanished with a rather heightened colour.

Huntley made his way slowly through the chattering throng, looking this way and that to see if he knew any of the company, when his arm was seized from behind, and turning, he found himself confronted by Boyle.

"So glad you've turned up," exclaimed the young man. "Come and see Miss Chapman. There she sits near the alcove, and of course Bingham, and Foljambe, and Courtney are hemming her in. We must run the blockade."

Huntley was decidedly surprised at her appearance, she was so much more beautiful than he had noticed before; but his heart beat none the

quicker, and when, to the chagrin of the other men, she made room for him on the settee beside her, he took his seat with the same calmness as if it were a theatre-stall which he had paid for in advance. Tudor Bingham, a pasty-faced little fellow with slate-coloured eyes, a fish's mouth, and dank-looking, long black hair, was leaning languidly against the wall, and talking in a monotone.

"So vulgar Philistines criticize us, find fault with our morals, with our religion, and with other things that have nothing to do with Art. But we are not disturbed; we know that Art and Beauty are the only things worth living for. We propose to burn with a hard, gem-like flame upon their altars, and we know that, considered from this point of view, vice and virtue, religion and irreligion, prayer and blasphemy, are one and the same."

He looked at Huntley fiercely as he concluded, only, however, to wince at what he saw. Huntley's face wore no perceptible expression, but quiet contempt seemed to radiate from his whole being.

"Beauty!" exclaimed Foljambe, rapturously, "beauty! That is it! And he alone is the true artist who sees beauty in everything. Beauty is sorrow as well as joy, in disease as well as health, in uncleanness as well as in purity!"

"Beauty in uncleanness?" queried Miss Chapman. "I really scarcely follow you there. Do you, Mr. Huntley?"

"I once knew a very handsome Italian organ-grinder who hadn't washed himself for three years," replied Huntley. "I suppose that is the kind of thing?"

There was a crackle of laughter, and Miss Chapman hid her face behind her fan. Foljambe did not seem to see the joke; he stared loftily at the speaker, as if he were an unexpected and rather rare insect. Then, having classified him to his own satisfaction, he proceeded with his rhapsody; but the spell was gone, and his passionate periods fell flat.

Courtney, a very tall lank man, with flat cheekbones, and an insufferable air of superiority, took up the parable.

"We English have no Art, and our Literature is moribund. In such an age of pygmies, an ordinary man seems a giant; but the whole Victorian era will be looked upon by the next generation with the same sort of tolerant contempt as we now-a-days think it right to assume when we speak of the eighteenth century. From the very earliest ages—"

"Mr. Huntley, I'm going to ask you to take me into the conservatory for a few minutes," said Miss Chapman. "It is really too hot for anything in this room."

Courtney made way for them to pass with a very bad grace, and when they were gone said, with Olympian disdain, "Who is that solemn-looking fellow?"

"That is my friend, John Huntley, of Fenchurch Buildings," remarked Boyle, eager to pick a quarrel if possible.

"One of those confounded city fellows," said Foljambe, shrugging his shoulders. "I wonder Mrs. Golightly should have such people here."

"I said he was my friend," replied Boyle, concisely, "so I consider your remark impertinent, Mr. Foljambe, and as your father was an

accountant in the city, I consider it infernally foolish into the bargain. If you have anything to say to me we will go outside."

"You want to eat me I suppose," growled Foljambe.

"No—we nail your breed on barn-doors," retorted Boyle, and Foljambe having no more to say, walked off scowling horribly, to find another young lady to whom he could air his theories.

"Now this is much more pleasant," said Miss Chapman, when Huntley had found her a chair in the cool and deserted conservatory.

Huntley acquiesced.

"Mr. Huntley," continued she, playing with her fan, "you cannot think how much we poor benighted barbarians enjoy the brilliant talk of your London salons. I suppose you are so accustomed to it that you don't notice it."

"I haven't noticed any to-night," replied Huntley, "and yet I am far from being accustomed to anything of the sort. This is the first time for more than ten years that I have been into 'society,' as it is called."

A swift flash of—what was it?—surprise—exultation—or merely gaslight? passed over Miss Chapman's face. "And what made you come to-night?" she asked demurely.

"Mere idle curiosity," replied Huntley with a little self-contempt in his tone, "nothing else in the world."

Miss Chapman bit her lips, and her fan became very irritable; she seemed to have expected quite another answer.

"Let us go, I am tired of this place; it is dull," she said impatiently.

Huntley rose.

"No," said Miss Chapman, more impatiently than before. "Let us stay. One place is as bad as another."

Huntley bowed and resumed his seat.

"Those were all very distinguished young men whom I was talking to," remarked his companion after a pause.

"Indeed?" said Huntley.

"I like to meet men of that sort," she went on, bright and intellectual, and free from conventionalities. "Don't you, Mr. Huntley?"

"To speak frankly," he replied, "I cannot say that I care for the three young gentlemen you were talking to. They are not distinguished, except in their own little clique, and all they said seemed to me mere boyish bravado, intended solely to attract attention."

"How severe you are," said Miss Chapman, with a rather mortified air. "But then you see you are not literary."

If this remark was intended to annoy Huntley, it failed lamentably in its object, for he agreed at once that he was not, with quiet but perfectly evident satisfaction.

Miss Chapman seemed to be getting more and more out of temper every minute. She tapped the floor quickly with a tiny boot, and her face assumed a fretful expression. She rallied her forces however for a last assault.

"I was introduced to Lord Curlew yesterday, at Lady Lupin's," she said, "and he is going to make up a party, and take us down to the Derby—isn't it kind of him? I want to see the Derby of all things."

"Lord Curlew?" asked Huntley in a surprised

tone, "I didn't know he was tolerated amongst respectable people. Does Mrs. Golightly know of his offer?"

Miss Chapman grew a little white about the lips, and her eyes sparkled.

"Yes," she said, "she is going too. You speak as if you had some objection to make. Lord Curlew at any rate is too much of a gentlemen to slander people behind their backs."

Huntley shook his head with a faint smile, "You do him an injustice," he said, "I have come across him once or twice in the way of business—for he is hard up, and speculates—and so I know him pretty well. I can understand that you think I am interfering unwarrantably, but I assure you this is a more serious matter than you suppose. I must speak to Mrs. Golightly." And before she could recover from her astonishment he was gone, and she, a daughter of the great Republic, with her country's notions of the freedom and independence of woman, had been treated like a milk-and-water school-girl by this most odious and imperturbable of Britons, without saying a word. She felt that she was in a passion, and that there was nobody by to notice it. It was a bitter moment, but there was nothing to be done. She went to the drawing-room, and sought for Bingham and Foljambe, and Courtney. They were soon clustered about her, and she proceeded to make herself as agreeable as possible to them.

Ten minutes later she had the satisfaction of seeing Huntley pass on his way out, just as all her faithful satellites were greatly enjoying a joke of hers. They all treated him to the regulation supercilious stare, but he did not notice either her or her court, and his face was placidity itself.

"I think Mr. Huntley the rudest and most objectionable person I have ever seen," proclaimed Miss Chapman to her hostess, when the rooms were at last empty.

"I don't know what was the matter with him to-night," replied Mrs. Golightly. "He is certainly much changed since I used to know him. He absolutely wished me to decline Lord Curlew's invitation for the Derby, and said it was more than any woman's reputation was worth to be seen with him."

"I never heard of such intolerable presumption," exclaimed Miss Chapman, flushing angrily, though she had expected the news. "What did you say?"

"I was obliged to tell him that I could not think of such a thing, and he said no more. I am quite disgusted at his narrow-mindedness. Business deteriorates men very much, my dear."

Huntley was mercilessly dissected that night by the indignant ladies, and they considered then that he was effectually disposed of. But next day Lord Curlew wrote entreating forgiveness, and stating that he was called out of London for a fortnight on urgent business, and so could not go to the Derby after all.

The ladies gazed at each other with startled eyes after reading the abject epistle, and then both uttered with one accord the name of John Huntley.

CHAPTER II.

A TELEGRAM FROM NEW YORK.

THIS incident appeared likely to conclude all

friendly intercourse between Huntley and his fair client. He did not visit Mrs. Golightly again, and Miss Chapman avoided the city altogether. A few weeks after the occurrence she wrote a formal note, asking that £1000 might be paid to her credit at a certain bank, and in due course she received a lithographed circular, advising her that this had been done. The sum was to be devoted to bringing out a play by Tudor Bingham, which had been up to this time shamefully neglected by managers, in consequence, as Mr. Bingham declared, of a conspiracy amongst them to refuse him a hearing.

Miss Chapman, whose experience of poets had been very small, was unwise enough to give him a cheque for the entire amount at once. Bingham had never seen so much money before, and he was dazzled. To bring out a play was no doubt a very distinguished thing to do; but what a number of things could be done with a thousand pounds sterling! And then the play might be damned the very first night, and there was an end of distinction and of the thousand pounds as well. After a little reflection, and a feeble struggle against temptation, he pocketed the cash and bolted.

When his perfidy had been proved beyond doubt, Miss Chapman's one idea was to keep the whole business quiet. If Huntley ever got to know of it she thought she must die of shame. She began to feel that she hated Huntley cordially, without knowing exactly why; but about this time she was compelled to visit him on business. He was precisely as when she first saw him, and she was studiously cold and brief, so the business did not take long to settle. He rose to open the door for her when the interview was ended, and as he did so said in a business-like tone, "By the way, I have placed £950 to your credit again. I arrested Bingham at Liverpool, just as he was embarking for the States, and made him disgorge. He had taken his passage, and I gave him the odd fifty pounds to clear out of the country, as I thought you wouldn't like a fuss to be made."

Miss Chapman felt herself one burning blush from head to heel.

"What business had you to interfere?" she asked fiercely. "I would far rather have lost the money."

"I had no objection to your losing it," replied Huntley, "but I didn't like such a wretched little rascal as Bingham to get it. He sent you the play, with his compliments, and he hoped you would forgive him," and Huntley tendered a packet of manuscript.

Miss Chapman seized the unfortunate comedy, and, exerting all her strength, tore it into two pieces, which she cast passionately upon the floor, sweeping out of the office as she did so with the mien of an insulted empress. But Huntley handed her into her carriage with an utterly unmoved countenance, and did not seem to have a suspicion that such scenes as these were in the least unusual.

When she was fairly out of sight she had a violent cry, which did her good, and on thinking matters over she was obliged to admit that she was inclined to be frightened of Huntley. His mysterious power, his more mysterious knowledge, and his cold self-reliant reticence, had for her an

element of awfulness. Besides, she had never before met with a man who was entirely indifferent to her charms, who did not care two straws whether she was pleased or angry, and who seemed perfectly invulnerable alike to her flattery or abuse.

"I would give a year of my life to move him in some way," she muttered, clenching both her little hands like an angry child, and then she knitted her brows and fell to thinking hard.

Her next meeting with him, however, was destined to be of an even more humiliating character than this. Foljambe managed to tease her into allowing him to paint her portrait, and became at once a bore of the very first water. He was always wanting sittings that had not been arranged for; he was always catching new ideas, always altering, always pottering ineffectually about with no appreciable result.

Before long he took the opportunity of declaring his ardent affection for his beautiful sitter, but he did it in so guarded and respectful a manner that she considered a decisive refusal, and a strict injunction never to repeat his folly, a sufficient reply. Here she made a fatal mistake, of which Foljambe did not fail to avail himself, and so it happened that her life soon became a misery to her by reason of the man's vulgar and intolerable persistence. She appealed to Mrs. Golightly, but found her quite unable to cope with the affair, and indeed she was not long in arriving at a suspicion that her hostess, if not in league with the enemy, at least sympathized with him. She insulted Foljambe—but he was used to contumely and did not mind it—and then she found that people were beginning to talk.

She was at her wits' end. Once or twice the thought of an appeal to Huntley had occurred to her, only to be rejected with violence. But what was she to do? The plain fact met her that in her present need there was only one person in whom she had the least confidence, and that one person was John Huntley. Her pride kept her from him for long, but things became desperate, and pride had to go to the wall. One morning, telling Mrs. Golightly that she was going shopping, she went off by the Metropolitan Railway to the City, and hurried to Fenchurch Buildings.

Huntley was engaged; he would not be at liberty for half an hour at least. "Give Mr. Huntley my card," she replied indignantly, looking upon this as an equivalent to an "open sesame." The clerk returned with the intelligence that Mr. Huntley would see her as soon as possible.

She had made one or two steps towards the door before she reflected that, after all, her departure would probably be far from annoying to Huntley, and certainly very inconvenient to herself. So she waited, fuming and fretting, for full forty minutes. Then she was shown into Huntley's room. He was all self-possessed politeness, and she all flutter and palpitation.

"I wish to consult you as a friend," she began, and then came to a full stop.

"Quite so," said Huntley, to help her out.

"It is a delicate matter," she stammered, "and you must consider what I tell you strictly private and confidential."

"That goes without saying," he replied quietly. "You may, of course, depend upon me so far as that, whether I can assist you or not."

She made a long pause, hoping to detect some sign of curiosity in him, but the stratagem failed. He waited with patient courtesy, and without the least appearance of any desire to hasten her story. So at length she hurled the miserable tale from her with irritation and disgust. And a very highly-coloured passionate piece of word-painting it was, and full of fire and energy.

John Huntley gave no sign of surprise or indignation—he listened politely, and that was all. When the flow of eloquent language had ceased, he asked one or two commonplace questions, nodded at the answers, took a piece of paper and wrote a word or two, and then rose, as if the interview was at an end.

"Can you deliver me from this persecution without scandal?" asked his visitor in anguish. "I am friendless and alone; I appeal to you as an Englishman and a gentleman."

She clasped her hands in a supplicating way, and she was perfectly sure that she looked bewitching. She would not have been surprised if Huntley had lifted his hand to heaven and made a solemn vow to slay Foljambe or perish in the attempt.

"I will see what I can do," he replied in his emotionless voice. "You say you are to sit to this man to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"You shall hear from me in the morning then; meantime, do not disturb yourself. I am sorry that I must say good-bye now, but I am due at an important meeting."

"A block!—a stock!—a lay-figure!—I believe he is filled with sawdust!" murmured Miss Chapman as her hansom drove away. "I wish—Oh, how I wish—I had not told him!"

Her feelings underwent a marked change next morning, however, when she received a hastily-scrawled elliptical note, as follows:—

"Foljambe settled all right, he will not trouble you again. Take no notice of him if you meet.

"J. H."

It seemed too good to be true, and it was not till a day or two after, when she met the painter face to face in the street, and saw him turn away, pale and discomfited, that she could believe in her deliverance. From this moment her feelings toward Huntley altered entirely. He was all that is good and great, and nearly omnipotent into the bargain. She wrote him an effusive letter of thanks, to which he did not reply, and sent him afterwards a magnificent diamond ring, which he firmly declined to accept. In fact, she was totally unable to make the smallest impression upon him, and the more she failed the more she longed to succeed.

Huntley called upon Boyle, and gave him a little advice. "You are not making the running fast enough with Miss Chapman," he said. "You have only got Courtney against you now, but I believe you are going to let the girl slip through your fingers. Get engaged—make her safe—and be quick about it in heaven's name."

Boyle started. "I didn't know there was any hurry," he said, "and I didn't want to throw away my freedom before it was absolutely necessary; but if you are of opinion—"

"Well, I am," interrupted Huntley. "I don't want to see a brute like Courtney win her. She has the making of a good wife about her if she marries a decent man."

"You do me proud," said Boyle with exultation. "I'll waltz in right away. If I don't make Courtney prance around, it won't be my fault."

His procedure was simplicity itself. He picked a quarrel with Courtney, and threw him into the Thames from the Embankment. Two days after they fought a duel in Belgium, and Courtney received a bullet in the neck, which laid him up for three months, and his chance, if he ever had any was effectually extinguished. Then, flushed with victory, Boyle hastened to throw himself at Rose's feet without further preface.

To his disgust, she for a long time refused to take him seriously, and bantered him instead of replying. But she could not be very cruel to him, he was so gentlemanly and respectful, as well as sun-burned and handsome. She was about to decline his offer with thanks, when he seized his hat and said, "I will not take your reply now, Miss Chapman; I have surprised you, and you have had no time to consider. Besides, you are not in the humour to answer me seriously. I will wait for a week and then ask you again." And he added as he reached the door, "I hope you will remember that your reply may be a—er—er—in fact a matter of life or death to me."

The phrase did not please him when he had got into the street, and was comfortably sucking the knob of his cane. "It was too big a mouthful," he confessed, "It wouldn't come out plump enough. That's what comes of being so beastly ambitious."

A day or two afterwards he met Huntley. "I'll be hanged if I don't believe I have shot the wrong man," he said gravely.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't think there was anything to fear from Courtney," continued Boyle. "Whether you know it or not, Huntley, you are the man I ought to have let daylight into. She's always talking about you; you are a Chevalier Bayard in her eyes."

"Oh, nonsense," retorted Huntley, carelessly. "I've done a few little things for her in the way of business, and like most of her compatriots, she talks in an exaggerated style, that is all. I begin to think you are a faint heart, Boyle. I thought from your confident manner that you would have carried her off by sheer audacity long ago."

Thus admonished, and considering his reputation as a lady-killer at stake, Boyle proceeded to "made the running very hot," as he phrased it, and in a few days he was pretty sure of ultimate success. To tell the truth, he had over-estimated the danger from Huntley. There was too much awe mixed with Miss Chapman's respect and admiration for him to allow these promising feelings to melt together into love. Besides Huntley was cold and unimpassionate; having aroused one's enthusiasm, he checked it cruelly by seeming to find it a frightful bore; while Boyle, rapid and brilliant and fiery, was ready to work himself into sublime paroxysms of any sort of feeling you might require at a few minutes' notice, and to give you the impression that the said paroxysms were very creditable to everybody concerned.

On the evening of the day before Boyle was to receive his answer, the two friends parted before Huntley's door. "To-morrow," cried Boyle, wringing Huntley's hand excitedly, "To-morrow by this time I shall know my fate."

"Marriage is only part of a man's fate after

all," said Huntley, in a reflective tone. "And perhaps not so important a part as most people think."

"You're an old misogynist," shouted Boyle, as he ran off, and Huntley went straight to his study, where he devoted himself sedulously to the study of a charter-party, and a long business letter connected with it.

He had been occupied in this way for more than an hour, when a servant appeared bearing a telegram. It was from Rose Chapman, and ran as follows:—

"Please call here before going to the City tomorrow if possible. I have very important news from America."

He put the paper into his pocket, and not a muscle of his face stirred; but the servant detected a sudden lightening and darkening of his eyes, and wondered what it signified. Then he resumed his letter and his charter-party.

It was half-past eleven next morning when he reached Mrs. Golightly's house, and to his surprise he met Boyle coming out, a woebegone and crest-fallen man.

"Why, you don't mean to say," began Huntley, "that you have been——." He stopped from motives of delicacy, because "cashiered" was the only word his business-training supplied him with at the moment.

"Don't you know what's up?" asked Boyle dejectedly; "haven't you seen the newspaper?"

"Yes, but there was nothing of especial interest in it."

"Didn't you notice the failure of Benedict's bank in New York?"

"I did; but what then?"

"Miss Chapman's entire fortune is gone in it," said Boyle tragically. "Every penny. She had a telegram last night. She has behaved very nobly. She released me from my engagement, if you can call it an engagement, at once. She behaved as well as anybody could, but it's a blow to me, Huntley—a decided blow, for I was getting really fond of the girl; I was, upon my soul."

Huntley smiled a peculiar smile, and entered the house. Boyle thought he did not seem so sorry as he ought to have done at the misfortune of a friend, and he told Hawkins over a pint of champagne at the club that Huntley was a good fellow, but lacked feeling for others.

Huntley was shown into the drawing-room, where Miss Chapman stood with the fatal cable-message in her hand; she had been weeping, but he noted with satisfaction that her nose was not red. He found it difficult to sympathize with women whose noses got red when they cried.

"It is very kind of you to come," she said after a pause. "I see you have heard why I sent for you. West & Co. have no doubt cabled you to stop my payments."

"I haven't been to the office yet," replied Huntley, "so I don't know; but you need not let anything of that kind annoy you. I shall be very glad to supply you with whatever you may find necessary, on my own responsibility."

"You don't seem to be aware that I am entirely penniless," said the girl.

"I dare say things are exaggerated——" he began.

"Not at all," she interrupted vehemently. "I am utterly and entirely ruined."

"That makes no difference to my offer," he observed. "I suppose you will want to return to America as soon as possible. In that case I will take your passage at once."

"No, it would be accepting charity," said Miss Chapman proudly. "No; I thank you very much for your great kindness, but I could never put myself under such an obligation, even to you."

He thought she was looking decidedly better since the commencement of the interview; some colour had returned to her cheeks, and her eyes had a little light in them. The phrase "even to you," pleased him too.

"I think you are wrong not to accept my offer," he said. "I hoped that you looked upon me as a friend."

"So I do—so I do," she broke in eagerly. "You are the best and truest friend I have had since I have been in this country, and if I could accept such assistance from anybody it would be from you; but I would much rather not."

"Then," said Huntley in a serious and deliberate tone, "every obstacle having been most luckily removed from my path, I do not see why I should hesitate any longer. I cannot make a pretty speech, but if you will consent to be my wife I will try to make you happy and comfortable."

Miss Chapman had often boasted that nothing ever surprised her, but there is no doubt that her astonishment at this juncture was very great and very genuine.

"You!" was all she could gasp. "You of all men!"

"I—of all men," he repeated quietly; "and why not? I cannot rave about my passion either in prose or verse. I'm not going to say that my whole life will be irretrievably blighted if you refuse me—I think that sort of thing all nonsense—but I feel quite convinced that we are excellently suited to one another, and—and——"

"Some women would take advantage of your chivalry, for it is nothing else," she said, looking him straight and searchingly in the face.

"There is no chivalry about it," he said. "And I am glad of it, for I think chivalry is all nonsense too. I have thought for a long time that you are the only woman I ever saw that I should care to marry."

"You have kept your thoughts very carefully to yourself," she retorted.

"For two reasons," replied he. "First, Boyle had taken me into his confidence, and told me he meant to ask you to marry him."

"Did he also tell you why?" she cried indignantly. "I did not believe such pitiful wretches existed, till I saw him skulk away this morning."

"Second," continued Huntley, ignoring this outbreak, "you had too much money for me. I have no fancy for marrying an heiress."

"Oh, indeed," she said in a curious tone, "may I ask what is your objection?"

"I have fought for my own hand all my life," he said, "and I like it. I have plenty of money for all my wants, and I shall be passably rich before long if I keep on working—and I want to keep on. The dilettante dawdling that these pseudo-artists and amateur literary men call life would kill me in a week. I like to feel I have worked for all I have got. I like to feel I shall have to work for all I shall get in the future."

"I respect your feelings very much," replied

Miss Chapman, "and I sympathize with them to some extent. With regard to your offer, I am sorry to say there happens to be an insurmountable obstacle in the way of my accepting it."

"Ah, I was afraid there might be," he said, taking up his hat. "I am late already; I must go."

"You don't care to know what it is?" she asked in a mocking tone.

He put his hat down, and stared at her. "Not much if it is insurmountable," he said.

"Well," she replied, tearing the telegram in pieces, and scattering them over the floor. "It is quite insurmountable, as you will be the first to own. I am as rich as ever I was. I got a friend in New York to send me that telegram announcing my ruin, merely that I might make certain if Mr. Boyle was after my money or me. Benedict's Bank failing at the same time was a lucky chance, which gave verisimilitude to my imposture, but I have not lost a farthing by it or by anything else. So, as you won't marry an heiress, you had better go; and as I won't marry anybody but the one true, unmercenary man I have met in England, I must die a spinster."

And then Huntley folded her in his arms.

A few minutes afterwards, when, with a rather heightened colour and hair a trifle less smooth than before, she was sitting by him on the sofa, she said with a shy smile—

"And now tell me—when did you first begin to—to like me?"

"After Mrs. Golightly's 'at home' I determined to marry you if possible," replied the downright Huntley.

"So long ago as that!" she exclaimed. "That is wonderful. I thought you despised me, and I was determined to hate you, till I found you could do exactly as you pleased with everybody. But I could not withstand that, for I worship power. How you scattered those men who happened to be in your way! It was marvellous."

"You will exaggerate," he said, laughing. "There was nothing wonderful about it. Here is the whole story:—Curlew knew I could make the City too hot for him if he didn't do as I wished; Boyle told me all about Bingham, and he heard from Mrs. Golightly. I guessed the fellow would make for America, so I telegraphed a description of him to the Liverpool police. I found Foljambe was heavily in debt, and I got an old Jew to buy up two or three of his bills. That was enough for him. I set Boyle on Courtney, and I left Boyle to settle himself, as he would inevitably have done in the end if you hadn't taken the matter in hand and settled him. So there was nothing marvellous in the affair after all."

LADY ANSTACE.

SO—your eyes looked strained, as they fain would weep?

Say, what should make you sicken and start? What is it comes between you and your sleep?

Is it the ghost of a wronged man's heart? You!—yes, you with the solemn brow,

Grand and calm as a white moonrise— And the scarlet lips—I can see them now!—

And the sweeping glance of your great dark eyes.

No—you "didn't mean"—and you wouldn't have done:

But was there no thought of triumph there— Of joy for the spoil of a man's heart won,

Under the crown of your braided hair?

Was there no touch of a cruel pride

In the midst of your frank and fearless glee?

Had you struck a dagger into his side,

You had been kinder to him and me!

Yes!—he will conquer!—it would not be he,

If his great heart could not live down that pain!—

But the man who is all my life to me

Will never more be the same again.

And, maybe, I think, the touch of pain—

The jarring note in your life's sweet song

Will never, never leave you again:—

God's justice is sure, though it tarry long.

A. WREN.

NOVEMBER.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

Farewell to the lilies and roses,

Adieu to green leaves and bright skies,

Prepare for red hands and blue noses,

Fogs, chilblains, sore-throats and old guys.

The sun, Sagittarius nearing,

Begins to look blousy and queer;

And winds sing in accents uncheering

The last dying speech of the year.

AUTUMN no longer sheds its wealth of colour upon the wooded hills, but has given place to the bare and forlorn aspect incidental to the season, when the glories of the woods and the lanes have departed, and another year has nearly passed "as a tale that is told."

"The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,

Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sear."

The trees have successively doffed their vestments, and now stretch their naked arms to the watery November sky, "bare leafless choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

It is possible, if the southern winds continue, that some of the mild October weather may yet linger during the first part of the month; but the fierce north wind will soon begin to blow, driving before it dark masses of leaden-coloured clouds, which cover the whole sky, casting a universal shade over the landscape; while the fields and woods lie wrapped in a dull grey hue. It is useless to strive to delude ourselves, however, with these few fine days, for under whatever aspect November makes its first appearance its advent must cause us to feel that summer is gone, autumn well-nigh spent, and stern winter rapidly advancing in the background to

"Reign triumphant o'er the conquer'd year."

There comes a mighty roaring in the great wood, the dried leaves are torn from the shivering branches and whirled in maddening eddies to fall in flaky showers, and the dim wintry daylight penetrates the shadiest haunts, revealing a picture of nakedness, desolation and decay. Only on the

sturdy oaks the leaves yet linger, loath to fall, rustling in the wintry wind, and many will remain until pushed off by next spring buds.

In some sheltered spots the drift of withered leaves is nearly ankle deep, and as we kick them on one side during our walk the air is filled with a curious fluctuating odour, sometimes pungent and oppressive, sometimes aromatic and pleasant. Despite their bareness the great oaks, beeches and antlered ash trees, in their solemn grandeur, appeal to the heart even now, and the true lover of the woods may yet find beauties to admire. Even in summer there is a feeling of loneliness in the centre of a great wood; but now the silence is impressive, in great measure due to the absence of insect life; most birds keep to the outskirts of a wood, and only the occasional sad note of the wood-pigeon, which at the present moment seems in harmony with the surroundings, the yuk, yuk! of the green woodpecker, and the ubiquitous robin are to be seen or heard. The squirrel no longer leaps from bough to bough, but has wrapped his tail around him, coiled in the hollow of some tree, surrounded by his hoard of nuts and beech masts, and feeds and sleeps alternately. The hedgehog has scooped himself a hollow beneath some bank, surrounded himself plentifully with leaves, and gone to sleep without any provisions at all; the fieldmouse and the dormouse are also prepared for their three months' sleep; the frog and the lizard, in obedience to the same wonderful instinct, have disappeared until the return of the first warm days of spring.

This hibernation, or, more properly, winter sleep, by which some animals avoid the consequences of severe winter cold, is as remarkable as it is interesting. The bat, hedgehog, dormouse and badger are the most familiar examples in this country. No birds are known to adopt this method, their greater powers of locomotion enabling them to migrate to warmer climes. During perfect hibernation respiration is very nearly suspended, and the temperature of the body is lowered to that of the atmosphere, so that the circulation of the blood is extremely slow. In the case of all these animals a large amount of fat is accumulated during the plentiful period of summer, on which the animal lives and supports the trifling heat maintained through the winter months. The loss of weight at the end of this winter sleep is said to be about forty per cent., almost as much as sustained in death by starvation.

Any one who is abroad in the fields and woods at this season cannot but notice the scarcity of birds, compared with the numbers that were everywhere to be seen during the summer. All the true migratory birds, such as the swallow, and warblers have left us long ago; but in addition to these, recent observations which have been made at most of the light-houses on our coasts, under the auspices of the British Association, have brought to light the fact, that with the exception of our game birds, and perhaps the green woodpecker, which from its structure seems but ill adapted for long flights, all birds are migratory. Even such tiny weak-winged birds as the golden-crested wren, the common wren, the hedge-sparrow, and the common sparrow cross the North Sea in great numbers. The thrush, the blackbird, the robin, the skylark and the chaffinch migrate in large flocks to the shores of the Mediterranean

during the winter months. It was formerly supposed that these birds waited for favourable wind and weather before starting on their long journey, but it is now known that they cross the sea in all sorts of winds and weathers, and at all hours of the day and night. On clear starlight nights they fly high, but in fog or rain they fly very little above the waves. On thick dark nights they often strike against the lanterns of the light-houses; many are killed at once and others so injured that they cannot proceed on their journey. In this way many birds that were not before known to migrate have been identified.

About this time another migration, but of our own species, takes place in great numbers. What we may designate generally as the vagabond tribe, men and women, who have been wandering up and down the country during the summer months, whom it would be somewhat difficult to classify, now seek the towns in vast quantities. There always has been, and probably always will be, a numerous race to whom the attractions and charms of independence, though it be but a beggarly independence after all, are more alluring than any settled occupation however profitable.

The more respectable portion of these nomads are petty traders, artificers, or professionals of some kind, who range the country all through the summer, picking up a living, such as it is, by doing odd jobs, or the sale of some trifles, apparently happy and contented, and putting a cheerful weather-beaten face upon every hardship. To persons of their temperament the sense of freedom compensates for the loss of many comforts. Many are, according to their own statement, avowedly willing to work, whenever and at whatever work is procurable, but we generally find that practically they are much more given to levying contributions under the plea of want of employment than contributing by their own industry to their daily wants. Society in general does not look very favourably upon this last section, and to speak the truth has no great reason to be proud of them, for the most part they are lazy ingrained scoundrels, roaming from one end of the land to the other in search of prey.

We confess that we have much more sympathy with your downright sturdy vagabond, who will never work if he can help it, and who never pretends that he wants to, who will sleep contentedly in a gravel-pit, an old barn, or on the lee side of a hedge; who lives entirely by "cadging," and who knows the inside of every casual ward in the country. He is, no doubt, a dirty mendacious vagabond, he will not work and to beg he is not ashamed; and yet there is such a rollicking independence about the scamp, such an utter absence of pretence to be other than he is, that although we know him to be literally a "good-for-nothing," we cannot help feeling a tenderness for his failings.

In addition to all these whom we meet with their faces towards the large towns at this time of year, there to eke out the weary time as best they may, there are the gipsies, who at this season seek the same shelter, and sell the proceeds of their industry in the streets. By this means, and by what their wives manage to wheedle from silly people under the pretence of "telling their fortune," they manage to live tolerably well.

Another large tribe of migrants, though not now as numerous as before railways intersected

the country, are the peripatetic showmen of all grades, and circuses, that at this season conclude their country campaigns, and retire into winter quarters. The "roo-te-too" of Mr. Punch is no longer heard on village greens; the performing dogs and monkeys withdraw from seaside resorts and distant villages; the fat woman, the weak kneed giant, the squeaking dwarf, and all those perversions of nature so dear to the rustic mind retire into private life.

Every small school-boy knows the date of "Guy Fawkes' Day," and the history of the terrible conspiracy in which the original of his "guy" played so distinguished a part. Perhaps, however, many of our readers may not be aware that the very lantern that was taken from Guy Fawkes is still preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is very strongly made of iron, and must have originally been very heavy, though now in parts a good deal worn away by rust. By the side of it is a fac-simile of the letter to Lord Monteagle—the original is in the State Paper Office in London—which led to the discovery of the plot. Rivetted to the lantern is a brass plate bearing a Latin inscription, which may be translated thus: "The very lantern that was used by Guy Faux and which he was bearing when seized in the crypt, where he was attempting to blow up the House of Parliament. It was given to the University in 1641, by Robert Heywood, lately proctor to the University."

A celebrated French novelist in describing our climate made one of his characters say, "that villainous country, where it is always cold, where the fine weather is fog, the fog rain, the rain a deluge; where the sun resembles the moon, and the moon is like cream cheese." But even in November, which is popularly supposed, erroneously we think, to be the worst of the year, we have many fine days when delightful country walks may be taken with pleasure. Days when the sun shines and the air is genial; there are not many of them it is true, and they appear to come but to remind us of the delights that we have lost. We are far from admitting that November is the worst month of the year, and as for fogs, we generally have worse fogs in December than ever we do in November. Poor Hood did not like the dull days that begin with this month, to him there appeared to be

"No warmth, no cheerfulness, no health, no ease,
No comfortable feel in any member:
No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds,
November!"

But we are not all dyspeptics; if we but keep a good digestion we shall find a bright side even to the thickest fogs, we shall find that the last days of the year may be made as joyous as the first. What though no gentle "zephyrs" blow and the "azure vault" is hidden,

"A southerly wind and a cloudy sky"

comes to the delight of many who don the "pink" and hasten to the meet, for the very weather which affects some people with the blues delights the foxhunter, and he succeeds in chasing away both the blues and the fox together.

Now is the time of year when evening comes to draw the curtains close and enjoy our fireside comforts. "A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the

rigour of the game," as Mrs. Battle has it, may now be indulged by the glowing hearth, the ringing laughter and the joyous song may now be heard that, like Ithuriel's spear, will scatter a host of blue-devils. What though it be damp and cold without, our hearts are warm within, we will enjoy ourselves while we may, and look forward to the bright and sunny days yet in store for us.

"IN HOC SIGNO."

(A Dream-Allegory.)

BY COULSON KERNAHAN, F.R.G.S.

I DREAMED a dream. Before me lay
The gates of Heaven. A great array
To welcome One who came that way
Stood rank on rank, in glory crowned,
When through the silence all around,
I heard a voice like trumpet sound :
"The fight is gained, the conflict done,
True unto death, th' Eternal Son,
Enters the rest divinely won.
"To rescue man in love He came,
Conquered is Satan, sin, and shame,
Death from henceforth is but a name.
"Throw open wide the heavenly gate,
The Victor comes ! let angels wait
To greet with glad, triumphant state !"
Within the city passed the band,
With flaming swords on either hand,
Two pearl-clad angels took their stand.
I, on the outside, trembling lay,
And, rising, sought the gates of day,
If, haply, I might pass that way.
Alas ! too soon my hope was lost—
The angels' swords were sudden cross'd.
Back from the shining portals toss'd
I fell despairing. "Mortal, whence
Claimst thou admittance ? None come hence
Save they of spotless innocence.
"When thou wert living didst thou seek
To do God's will with spirit meek,
Comfort the sorrowing, aid the weak,
Own Him, and only Him thy Lord,
With all thy heart and soul ador'd,
With faith unfaltring do His word ?
"Speak then—for hangs on thy reply,
Whether these gates thou passest by,
Or down to endless darkness hie !"
I strove to answer—but as some
By sudden fear are stricken dumb,
My lips were sealed—no words would come !
Vainly again to speak I tried,
For—God have mercy !—at my side
Yawned a black gulf of darkness wide ;
And ever nearer, nearer drew.
Once more to speak I tried anew—
In vain ! then up my hands I threw
In wild despair, and on my breast
A cross I drew. Ah, God be blest !
The gulf is gone, and I, at rest,
Within the gates am standing now,
Before me One upon Whose brow
A crown of thorns—ah, Saviour, Thou !

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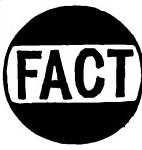


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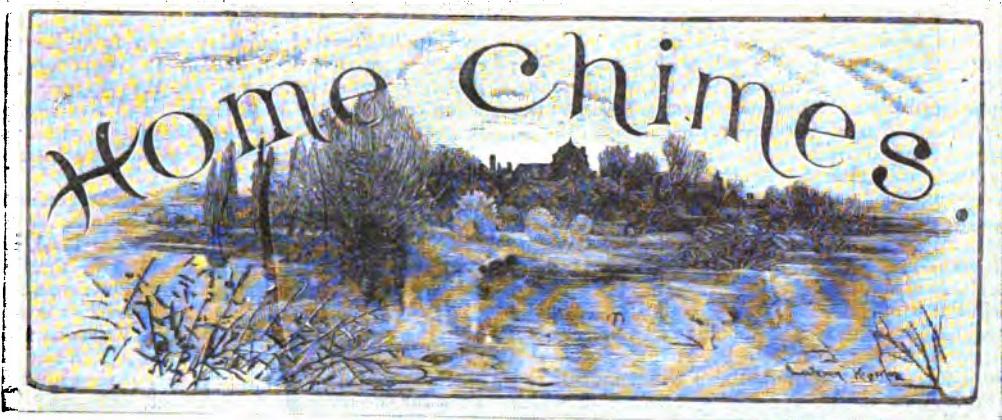
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EDITED BY F. W. ROBINSON.

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LONDON: NOVEMBER 21, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

A SHADY STREET.

BY S. LEIGHTON.

—

I.

THE STREET.

K NIGHT Street is not like any other street. It has a physiognomy of its own, which holds not the slightest resemblance to any other thoroughfare of the great seaport of which, to my mind, it is one of the most interesting spots.

Though only a few paces removed from the main arteries of the town, it is as much ignored by the followers of good form and fashion as, in the Metropolis, are the precincts of Shoreditch and Whitechapel by the inhabitants of Belgravia and Mayfair.

Parliament, Duke, Lord, and Bold Streets, starting from the low-lying ground by the river, and running eastward up the slope of the town, catch it in their parallel; yet it is not of them, for while the two first run through various phases of respectability, commencing life with a shipping interest, and working gradually through warehouses, foreign lodging-houses, shops and breweries, to more pretentious dwelling houses, and the two latter devote themselves to the wants of the wealthy, in the way of offices, club rooms, banks and shops, Knight Street exists solely for its own inhabitants, and such unfashionable people as myself, who shun willingly the thronged pavements of the popular thoroughfares for the wealth they find in less trodden paths.

Wealth in Knight Street! The idea may seem ludicrous to the superficial observer, who, having once chanced on the place, resolves to avoid it for ever after.

He, no doubt, has been beguiled into it under false pretences, fancying that the broad way opening from the thoroughly respectable Hope Street, which, at this point, cuts it at right angles, under the scholastic and artistic auspices afforded by the educational piles at its head, will lead him

rapidly to the heart of the city. Now this broad portion is, to all intents and purposes, a part of Knight Street, though it figures under the name of Mount Street, yet who dare recognize it as such? Not its inhabitants—no—for though Hope Street as a place of residence is desirable, and Mount Street possible, nobody could live in Knight Street.

Well! perhaps its myriad inmates do not live. Their existence may be mere vegetation, but the simplest weed by its very existence justifies itself, though it may spring up, execute its mission, and decay apart from the admiring gaze of man. From the lowly wayside flower, from the denizens of the marsh, the moorland or the mountain, the seeing eye extracts histories of transcendent wonder which may not be read in the bosom of the pampered blossoms of our hothouse beds. Let others revel in the charms of camellias, pelargoniums, or dahlias, give me the simple buttercup, the despised dandelion, or the sweet bluebell. Not that I scorn the beauties of the cultured flower: I can luxuriate in the velvety texture of the gloxina, stand entranced by the wonderous mechanism of the orchid, or be ravished by the intoxicating scent of the rose; but when I have seen a pure dewdrop glisten in the simple chalice of a daisy, I have thought no jewel so lovely as the bead which transfigured the bosom of the untended flower.

In the squalor, the filth, the indigence of Knight Street, I once discovered a heart, humble, lowly, and simple as my daisy, irradiated by a love and faith as clear and beauteous as its drop of dew.

Twice a day my business leads me down the inclination of its parapets—twice a day my footsteps, homeward bound, hasten gladly to its ascent. I never tire of it. Each passage adds some little store to my harvest of impressions, and discloses some characteristic, some virtue unnoticed before.

I may be said to know every stock and stone of the place, and could answer fearlessly the most rigorous catechism.

Then might you hear what kind of inhabitants frequent the sunny side, what kind the shady; you might apprise the worth of the numerous, comparatively wealthy families congregated in the upper portions of the houses, which can only be approached by the high-standing stone steps; and of their more humble brethren who throng the deep-sunk cellars, by the various notifications of their callings. Somewhat above the level of the eyes appear announcements of more aristocratic import—milliners, dressmakers, tinkers and tailors, midwife and undertaker, joiners and bricklayers, while the indications of the sweep, the baker, the coal-dealer, and the merchant who recognizes decayed iron and rotten bones as marketable merchandise venture not above the height of the knee. You might speedily get to know which establishment lets itself out in “beds for single men”—where “mangles are lent by the hour on hire”—where “umbrellas are re-covered with neatness and despatch” and “boots and shoes are mended while you wait,” with many other items of similar importance. You might even learn something of the life going on in the half-dozen courts which branch off at intervals on either side, by passing in the early morning hours, before the bearers of hods, pickaxes or tool-wallets have given place to unkempt women who idle and gossip under the pretence of nursing the helpless members of their progeny, and the squads of children who, dirty and ragged, unceasingly maintain on the narrow parapets their right of way and play, or in the evening when the lords of creation, “nose-warmer” in mouth and hands in pockets, lounge against lamp-post and wall, while the gentler sex crouches, arms a kimbo, on the doorsteps, or carries on high-pitched conversations from window to window across the limited space of the street.

I take a pride in encouraging, as far as lies in my power, the industries of the colony.

Since I discovered it some years ago, the instability of umbrella coverings does not affect my spirits, as it formerly did. I sometimes lament that I do not more readily run down at heel. When my wife requires a charwoman or a dressmaker, I leave a message with Mrs. Flora Scruber or Miss McStitcher. As our domestics marry off, or otherwise disappear, the vacancies are readily filled by daughters of the Knight.

Mr. Patch makes up, or I should perhaps say, makes down, my garments for my little boys. Mr. Playner builds them extra strong wheelbarrows. Mr. Soutie is well up in my flues. Mrs. Mendem has re-caned my chairs. My knives and scissors still bear the impress of Mr. Grinder's wheel. Familiar fenders, curtain poles, old trunks, ornaments, or even the misprized physiognomy of some undervalued ancestor, peer at me from the murky recesses of the broker's shop; and on windy days the cast-off clothing of my womankind flaps after me from Mrs. Cekonand's doorposts. Finally, I am a lover of books, and Knight Street can boast of a famous old book-stall.

II.
DOODY.

Half-way down this delectable thoroughfare, on the right side, is a little shop sacred to the restoration of soles. Night and morning, early and

late, indications of industry issue from its precincts—now the low, hollow tick-tack of the hammer upon leather; again, the sharper note when coarser work is on hand, and the iron of hammer falls on the iron of clamp; above all and through all, the cheerful whistle, or the hum of some homely ditty, constantly distinguishable, speaks volumes for the merry heart and gladsome disposition of this votary of St. Crispin.

This establishment is on the lower level, and consists only of one room, thirteen to fourteen feet square. It is paved with broken tiles, and is somewhat gloomy; for though the window is sizeable, it contains the cobbler's entire stock-in-trade, and the light is intercepted by the opacity of the leathery masses. For this reason perhaps, rather than for the outlook on the street, he keeps faithfully to his bench by the open doorway.

The crown of his head lies somewhere below the pavement, and his well-polished, strongly developed organs of veneration and benevolence cannot fail to attract the attention of such pedestrians as pass upward or downward.

I was intimately acquainted with St. Crispin's phrenological development before his countenance was revealed to me, for as he worked in solitude, and for himself, he was neither compelled, like the ordinary gregarious working-man, to spread a minimum of work over a maximum of time, nor obliged to relieve the tedium of industry by interminable controversies upon nothing; and he laboured too steadfastly to scan the passers-by, save when changing his tools or his work.

But when for some months my footsteps had daily sought the flags of Knight Street, either his ear caught the sound of my tread, or his nose the scent of my leather, for he would raise his head in greeting ere my forerunning shadow slanted down the pavement in front of him and into his cellar.

He was a little thick-set man, bald, as I have already indicated, but that not so much from lack of hair, as from the peculiarity of its distribution, two thick bushy scallops environed his head, the one skirted the occiput and narrowed over the ears to join the other which enclosed the maxillary bone as in a frill of silvery lace. His complexion was ashen, strongly tinged on the cheeks with the red brown of spent embers, and, towards the lips and lower jaw, verging into blue-blackness.

He observed the world through a huge pair of spectacles of antique formation, composed of a small proportion of glass and an inordinate amount of brass. When, in spite of this obstacle, and the overshadowing density of eyebrow, a glimpse of his eyes was occasionally caught, the spectator was always struck as with a shock of surprise by their vivid blueness, as well as by the singular gentleness of their expression. His nose was neither aquiline nor pug, but had such a judicious blending of the two, that the hilarity suggested by the latter form, predominated only to the extent necessary for the production of an air of jocularity and good-nature, which was further accentuated by the inflated nostrils, and a slight upward tendency discernible at the corners of the mouth, which, though somewhat stiff and straight in character, would readily break to the expression of mirth, and the display of teeth, slightly jagged and discoloured, yet sound and strong in despite of his eighty years.

Doody was the name imprinted on his door-case —Patrick Doody, a sufficient indication of his nationality.

When my eyes first rested on his face I was conscious of a strange mesmeric feeling, as though I had already been "impressed by his personality."

Though my memory for names is exceptionally weak, for the recollection of faces and places I have the most extraordinary aptitude. A place I have seen but once, I know again instantly; a face I have once remarked, I recognize again, even after a lapse of years.

When, however, I referred to my mental calendar, for a period at which I might have known Patrick Doody, I found but a blank. I knew him, yet I knew him not. It seemed to me that I had met him before, but whether in earlier life, or in another state of existence, I could not decide.

Perhaps, had I been able to recollect the circumstances of a former meeting, I should have dismissed him from my mind at once and for ever. As it was, the thought of him persistently recurred, and would not be banished, and, like some knotty problem, my puzzle sought solution.

Then the man was there, for ever in my path to renew my wonder. When I passed his habitation, my fancy would hover round him, and when I turned aside, and chose some other way, I thought of him the more because, on his account, I avoided my chosen ground of meditation.

Eventually, I bethought me of his trade in connection with my own leathery understanding, and hunting up a dilapidated pair of boots, I wrapped them in an old newspaper—for I am not one of your proud sort, who dares not risk his dignity by bearing anything but the admissible parcel in brown—and straightway entrusted them to Patrick Doody's tender care.

Pat, I flatter myself, was more surprised than indifferent to my proceeding; anyway, his "top o' t' mornin' t'ye, sor" struck me as being remarkably hearty. He had evidently never regarded me in the light of a customer.

The sound of his voice, far from dispelling my phantasy, confirmed me in my notion. Its timbre was as familiar to me as his appearance, yet it did seem to me that the rich Irish brogue was a novelty.

"Your face and voice seem well known to me," said I, business being settled; "but I cannot remember where I have seen you before. In Ireland perhaps. Have you ever lived in Londonderry or Armagh?"

"Niver seed the soight on um, sor," said he, "one place or t'other. Thirty year, cum St. Patrick's Day, I'll be living here, wid niver wife nor choid to kape company wid me, an' it wus in Cork I furst saw the blessed dayloight, an' its there I'd be livin' till my Zeph sailed for Amerikay—"

"Ah," I interrupted; "it would be in America I met you."

"Ar, it would hardly be there, I'm thinking," said he, "fur I've niver set the sole uv my foot in the blessed place."

"Well, I have never been in Cork, so it could not be there; yet I cannot help thinking I have seen you somewhere, years ago. However, you'll bring up the boots to my house and we'll have a talk."

III. "MY ZEPH."

He brought the boots, and further confabulation convinced me that we had never met before. I found him possessed of an extraordinary amount of the loquacity and humour for which his countrymen are renowned. Under the influence of "a drop of the cretur" he became so vivacious that he filled my children with delight; they listened untiringly to his jests and stories, and were most anxious to have the "funny cobbler" come again.

After that he came pretty frequently, sometimes fetching or returning boots or shoes, sometimes merely for a walk and the enjoyment of a chat. Conversation was a real pleasure to him, and I am not ashamed to own that I derived both pleasure and profit from his talk. With Emerson, I hold the opinion that "Every man I meet is my master in some point, and in that I learn of him."

It was quite a marvel to me that this untutored man, through natural logic, independence of mind, and sheer hard thinking, should have arrived at a loftier standpoint than many men having the advantages of a liberal education, cultured conversation, and all the learning of the schools.

It is not to my purpose to give you the gist of our converse; it is the man's story, not his attainments, I would lay before you. To retail his opinions on politics, religion and philosophy, on art, literature and science, would be giving you a series of lectures which you would be unwilling to wade through. Suppose, therefore, you have skipped them, and are deeply impressed with a sense of his mental superiority, then let me tell you that it was largely due to institutions of which Liverpool has reason to be proud, for they place the opportunity of knowledge and culture within the grasp of every working man, woman and child, and do all that is possible to stimulate the desire for improvement.

In the first place, he attended a course of winter evening lectures, gratuitously given from the platform of a small hall in William Brown Street, by local celebrities in the paths of art, music, morals, science, literature, and the Lord knows what besides. Then he would pursue the subjects in volumes he could procure from the "Free Lending Library"—an institution which should have its parallel in every district in London—into which any person above the age of ten can gain entrance, on the production of vouchers as to honesty and respectability from two householders, as easily as into the British Museum; with the advantages of a comprehensible, though limited, catalogue, and the privilege of imbibing the literature at home. Then the reading room of Brown's Museum was open to him, and there he could refer to books of greater rarity, as well as to papers, periodicals and magazines; and if his subject was of a scientific nature, he could hunt out specimens in the spacious galleries of the same building.

As for art, he could satisfy his soul in that respect, in the adjacent buildings of the Walker Art Gallery; and for a few pence hear the grand organ of St. George's Hall discourse sweet music.

It was impossible to spend much time in Patrick Doody's company without coming to the conclusion that all his affection, his hope and his pride were centered in the son he lovingly called "my Zeph;" from whom he had been parted thirty

years. Only when we had become thoroughly acquainted did I gather the story of this separation, and with it some few glints of Pat's former life.

IV.

THE MEDIUM.

He had been a dashing young blade it appears—so lively, quick-witted and gay that he had won the affection of all the boys—and the girls too, I should fancy—of the small village near Cork, where he had grown up in the employment of a well-to-do shoemaker, whom he served faithfully; by his attractive qualities enlarging the compass of his business, and to such an extent gaining his good-will, that although Doody was considered much inferior in caste, he did nothing to oppose the ardent attachment which sprang up between his young workman and his only child; and for once the course of true love was permitted to run smooth.

The young couple were united; Doody was taken into partnership, and eventually succeeded to his father-in-law's business.

Patrick's married happiness was not of long duration, he lost his wife while their only child was yet an infant, and after his bereavement, all his tenderness was lavished on the boy.

He gave him every chance in life, stinting himself that he might send the lad to schools which were really above his means; allowing him a liberal supply of money, bringing him up, in short, as a "gentleman," and spoiling him in every way.

The result of this conduct was that the son, getting mixed up with companions of superior station to his own, grew ashamed of his father and his humble craft.

I make this assertion on my own responsibility. Patrick's regard for his son was too intense, his mind too noble and unsuspecting to divine such feelings in his bosom.

His manner of expressing his boy's dissatisfaction bore a trace of his own exalted nature. "My Zephaniah," said he, "couldn't bear the thought on me slaving at cobblin' when he was a gentleman, he was ever fur sellin' up the owd place an' immigratin' to Amerikay."

"It was long afore I could bring myself to it, for the place was loike a bit o' my own heart, there I was bred and born, there I spent my youth and manhood, there I loved and wedded, there I buried Leah.

"It was hard to uproot myself wid owd age comin' on, but, sure, it was for me boy's sake. I sold ivery bit belonging to me, and with five hundred pounds on me, we set off, me an' him, to Liverpool, to get a cheap passage in an immigrant ship.

"I took care to make a strong leather belt, an' in it I stitched our little fortune, Zeph lookin' on. Sorra a day had we been in England, at all, walking about, an' seein' soights, me with the belt clasped tight, for fear uv theaves an' robbers, when I got uneasy, thinkin' it had been meddled with, for the stitches were still right an' tight, but they were not like my own, tidy an' neat.

"I called Zephaniah, an' ripped it up, and niver a thing could I see, only some flattened bullets and rolls uv thin paper, fur the theaf had been

wary as Owd Blazes. But how it was managed of whin, I could niver make out, unless on the passage from Oirland, when I lay sick as a dog, an' riddy to ask Zeph to take me up an' drop me in the say.

"But there we were in a strange land wid beds to pay fur, an' our passage to take, an' niver a penny in our pockets at all, but some shillins in moine, and eight gold guineas in the boy's, just enough to carry him over.

"Arrah, my jewel! it's ruined we are!" sez I, repentin' I'd iver give in to the Amerikay plan; but Zeph were that bad he couldn't find words to say. Ar, me heart bled fur the boy, fur he took all the blame fur persuading me, an' wouldn't hear comfort.

"I was fur turnin' back wid the money we had to the owd home, but he was that proud, was Zeph, he couldn't bide the thought on it. There was enough for one passage to Amerikay, sez he, an' money was quickly found there. 'Here father,' he cries, 'take you the money an' go over an' make fur the gold-fields, an' its followin' you I'll be as soon as iver I've scraped the money. I'll be gettin' work at the docks where there's plenty; an' if you pick up a big nugget you'll sind fur me.'

"I looked at me boy's hands that had niver done a turn fur him, an' were white an' dimpled loike a lady's, an' the tears ran over. 'It's niver a barrel or bale you'll be movin' my boy,' I cries, 'while yew owd fayther can turn a welt—an' if there's a partin' its you goes first, an' I'll find some cobblin' to do in this fine town, where even the ragged boys run about in leather, bedad!'

"An' that was how it ended, though Zeph was hard to persuade as I was about sellin' up. I got some work to do for a cobbler in Scotland Road, fur I'd stuck to my tools, to be sure, an' I was quite set up when the toime came fur me boy to cross the say.

"Ar, it wus bitter partin'. Niver had we been separated afore, an' the Lord only knew when we should be jined. It was to the San Fransisky post-office I was to write, an' he swore he'd niver rest night or day till he'd made the money to bring me out to him.

"Thin the ship sailed. An' from that day to this—thirty years, seven months an' two days—niver a word have I heard uv him! All my letters lie iu that chaney mung, returned to me an' niver a scrape uv his pen have I seen.

"Why didn't I save money an' go out to Amerikay to seek him, you'll be saying, 'dade, an' where was I to look at all. Its a mighty big place, thinks I, an' I might just miss his letter when it comes. So I went on workin' here, an' saved an' saved, an' eddicated myself that he might niver blush for his owd fayther, an' if I'm too old an' weak to cross the great say when he sends, sure there's a tight little pile for my poor Zeph, if its livin' he is at all."

With these words the old man coughed his emotion down, and drew his horny hands over his eyes. I left him, a prey to very sad thoughts. Between the lines of his story I seemed to read something which had never entered his mind, which, no doubt, he would be the first to repudiate.

Instead of the son, noble, loving, devoted, and full of self-sacrifice that the father's fond fancy painted, I beheld a worthless scamp, who, despis-

ing the old man and his trade, though it supplied his luxuries, mixing in the company of youths of higher station than his own, imbibing their notions, and imitating their extravagances, had probably got into trouble, and wishing to leave his home and being without resources, had persuaded his too doating parent to sell all his goods and quit his native land, with the deliberate intention of defrauding him of his money, and afterwards—deserting him.

I beheld all this, I say, by an effort of intuition. A hallucination of my suspicious brain. The old man's sorrow had such an affect upon me that I resolved to institute inquiries through connections of my own in America.

True, the search was somewhat like one for a needle in a haystack, but a man who carried about such a cognomen as Zephaniah Doody, if he still did so, could not entirely obliterate himself.

Zephaniah Doody! What was the name of that spiritualist I interviewed in Boston, five years ago? *Doody!* Surely it was Doody! What was the man's appearance? Portly, sleek, *suave*. By *Gum!* that was the likeness which puzzled me! Yes, the very features of my good friend Pat. The voice? Yes—no, he was not Irish—he was a typical American. Let me see, he spoke as a stranger of the old country, of which he had read so much that he "longed to see it." No, I'm afraid this cannot be, yet the name was Doody. Why, I have a portrait of the man, *surely!* Where can it be? In my American trunks perhaps!

With the thought, I had reached the lumber room. My boxes were quickly overhauled, and two portraits of the spiritualist produced. Yes, my old man's son. To my mind there was no doubt of it.

I carried them with me in the morning and called on the old cobbler.

"Pat," said I "had your son an Irish accent?"

"As purty a brogue as iver an Oirishman was possessed uv," answered he, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

I felt flabbergasted.

"Was he anything like you in looks?"

"Sure it's the pictur of his parent he was, bless him."

"Would you recognize his likeness, Pat?"

"Would I rikognize the noson my face?"

"Well, is this anything like him?" said I, drawing from my pocket the small daguerreotype given to me by the spiritualist, and handing it to him.

"It's me son!" cried he, wild with delight, "it's me son! me dear boy—know him! indade, an' I know him, though it's so big and fine he's growed."

He hung over the common portrait in ecstasy. From time to time withdrawing his great brass spectacles to wipe them on his leatheren apron. "It's me son!" he kept repeating, without showing any disposition to inquire how the portrait had come into my possession.

"Well, here is another," said I, as I unrolled a large chalk drawing, a copy of one "done by spirits."

"What's this?" said Patrick, pointing to the upper part of the drawing, after having gazed his fill on the upturned sanctimonious features of the head he recognized as that of his son.

"Those are the spirits, Pat; they hover over him night and day."

"Is it him sez so?" asked the old man, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, "the rogue!"

"Well, Patrick, if that is your son——"

"Dade, and it is," interrupted he, "it's the verry spit o' him."

"Fortune has smiled on him, he is rolling in wealth, all derived from the spirits, through the credulous who consult him. He is one of the most celebrated spiritualists in Boston, a letter-writing medium. If you want to receive a message from any one in the other world, all you have to do is to despatch a letter through him. He will not vouch for a reply for one dollar, but send him two and he guarantees it. He is portly, prosperous, and plausible, indeed, one might fancy he had kissed the Blarney Stone, but he is an out-and-out American, and, between you and me, Pat—a bit of a humbug."

"Arrah, now, he was always that," said the appreciative Patrick. "Cunning as a weasel, bless him!—an' it's glad my owd heart is to hear uv him. God fur iver bless you, sor!"

I sat with Patrick Doody, and gave him the history of my interview with his son, described his establishment and his *modus operandi*, not for one moment concealing my firm conviction that the whole business was a cleverly concocted imposture, though linked with kindness of nature, genial feeling and apparent carelessness as to gain.

I somewhat slurred over the shady portions, I confess, lest I should hurt Patrick's parental feelings. Perhaps my precaution was needless, perhaps I might have broadly announced my opinion that all the roofs of Boston did not shelter an oilier, blander, more unmitigated swindler than Zephaniah Doody. He would have forgiven me,—for I brought him news of his boy.

As I approached his humble dwelling that evening, I observed an unwonted demonstration. Knight Street was in commotion. Knight Street was unanimous in its intention, and like a great swelling wave swept to one destination. Cellar and garret, first floor, second floor, third floor poured forth its inmates, courts and side streets added their contribution, and all streamed in a dense but orderly mass up-street, down-street and across-street to rejoice in the joy of Patrick Doody. He was holding a levée.

I checked my impulse to turn aside, and passing up the street managed to catch a glimpse of the scene over the heads of his neighbours who were listening to his story in sympathetic silence.

The daguerreotype passed from hand to hand, the life-sized drawing was nailed up on the wall, Patrick stood by it, brandishing his spectacles, and from the mean and dingy cellar his joyful words were borne to me—"This, me son wns dead an' is alive agen, he wus lost an' is found."

I had given Patrick his son's address, and he wrote to him at once, pouring out all the love and devotion of his old heart, with never a reproach to the undutiful son who had robbed him, deserted him, and broken his promise to him, leaving his aged and lonely parent to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, while he rolled in wealthy ease, flourishing on a fraud. He spoke of his joy at hearing of his boy once more, after the lapse of

years, his pride in his honourable position and celebrity, his delight in his pictured semblance.

He had now but one wish on earth—to see his Zeph before he died; but, alas, he was feeble and old—he dare not venture across the ocean—would his boy not come to England to close his old father's eyes, and shed a few tears over “poor Patrick Doody.”

In a postscript he added that he had saved money, some hundreds, all for Zeph, so he need not fear the cost of the passage, but come at once to his loving father.

I was troubled with the thought that Zephaniah Doody might not respond to the call, but the postscript was a saving clause. I trembled lest the old man should be undeceived—lest he should discover the true character of his son.

But Heaven, which metes out what seems to mortals scant justice, was kinder to Patrick than his own flesh and blood might have proved; for while resting in the joyous anticipation of a speedy meeting with his Zeph, he passed softly and quietly to the better land.

One morning, as I went by his shop, I found another levée going on. Neighbours were moving to and fro with sad and solemn faces, and kindly words and tears for the poor old man so beloved by them, who “was not to see his son after all.”

Was there no angel in all the heavens to convey the tidings to the spiritualist son, to awaken his remorse, to speak of the old Irishman’s loving heart? Was there no power to whisper of the father’s forgiveness, and to carry the message—“I am in glory, Zeph; when are you coming? Heaven is not Heaven while empty of you!”

“FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL.”

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of “Meadowsweet,” “A Lincolnshire Heroine,” &c.

CHAPTER X.

DON QUIXOTE.

LADY MARY FOOTITT, with hooked stick and reticule, was again to be seen in Tremenster, making her calls. When in good health, she was a thorough wanderer, spending much of her day looking up her friends, taking stock of shop windows, eyeing people’s front gardens—criticizing, praising, or reproofing, according to her own crotchety standards. She was a curious old lady, as warm-hearted as she was impulsive, but obstinate withal; as blunt in her conversation as she was bluff in her aspect. Her white hair often escaped from thraldom, and though she dressed somewhat juvenile for her years, the fashion of it was antique; she was a quaint *melangé* of old and new and bizarre. Edith Heron was only too happy to hear her accounts of her journeys and pilgrimages—the old order of things restored. She could now go to the Deanery without the anxious heart and gnawing unrest.

With Lady Mary’s accession to health and briskness, the year, drawing into the dreary months, seemed to become rejuvenated also. It was only the brown sere leaves on the trees, the eddying currents of them in the streets, that hinted that hopes of prolonged open weather must not be too seriously reckoned upon.

The old mill round seemed to have gone on with Aylmer, only his life was brightened. Now and again he met a fair face which intelligently regarded him, returning his salutation graciously. He avoided his *bête noire*, the one person whose fortunes and social grade were to be improved and established by the Dean’s officious wife. In contemplation, Aylmer almost hated that too busy personage. He had a little anxiety, too, about Dick Devensey. Dick had gone up to town, and Aylmer had not heard from him either to the good or bad. Strangely enough, the erratic fellow never wrote to his own people. Meeting Cicely Devensey, she informed him of this, bluntly declaring that if they were to have news of Dick it must come to them through him. Aylmer looked into the assertive lady’s face hopelessly. She was so masculine in her manner, her voice so rasping, he was almost inclined to question whether this very pronounced little person was woman after all.

“No, I have not heard from your brother, Miss Devensey,” said Aylmer quietly, “I think he should write home frequently.”

“When he does write,” chirped Cicely, “there never is anything in his letters. They are so brief we never can gather anything from them. Did not you expect to hear from him, Mr. Aylmer? You were always chums, I imagined.”

Aylmer did not at all like the pert way she had of using the word “chum,” but he answered her quietly.

“I liked your brother very much,” said Aylmer, “I can well excuse him writing to me. I believe he is in earnest now; his time will be taken up; he will not write until he can send some good news. I honestly think he is in earnest.”

“As if Dick ever could be in earnest,” laughed Cicely incredulously. “Oh, Mr. Aylmer, you cannot think me so infatuated as to believe in Dick’s setting himself to hard work. Dick never took an interest in anything that was likely to advance him in life.”

“I am afraid, Miss Devensey,” said Aylmer reprovingly, “you scarcely give the poor fellow credit for the good points he has.”

“Dick and I, we have always fought,” laughed Cicely, “I must confess we have been antagonistic from childhood. Is not that a dreadful admission, Mr. Aylmer?”

“I think you exaggerate, Miss Devensey——”

“No, I assure you. But I am going to the organ—I must be off, afternoon service will be over. Mr. Pulsford has promised me his attention—he has a spare hour this afternoon. I have always had a great desire for the organ—and the opportunity of the cathedral organ! Are you walking my way?”

“I have a call in Botolph’s Lane——”

“A dreadful neighbourhood, is it not? I was once placed as visitor in Botolph’s Lane, but I could not get along with the people, they were so dreadfully dirty and thriftless. I was insulted, too, by women and men. I had to tell Mr. Gibson

I must give it up, or he must find me another district."

"You have to be careful there as elsewhere of wounding susceptibilities," answered Aylmer, "that is all the difficulty."

"Have they susceptibilities?" enquired Cicely, with an innocent puckering of her brow, well acted.

"Indeed they have—as we have," answered Aylmer dryly.

"I did not credit them with rare sensibilities," said Cicely raspingly. "I thought them very low people, and vulgar. Oh, Mr. Aylmer, I had nearly forgotten—I wished to see you before today, I wanted to ask you if you would make one of our party at forthcoming amateur theatricals?"

"I do not know," answered Aylmer dubiously. "I might contribute to a fiasco. I have scarcely a suitable voice—I do not think it is clear."

"You certainly do buzz when you talk," said Cicely candidly, and with a laugh, "but you might overcome much of that. We must not have the gentleman *backward* at coming *forward*, particularly when we overcome the difficulty there has always been formerly of getting ladies to take female parts."

"Have you really overcome that difficulty?"

"We have, but there are only two female parts. We sent to French's for his catalogue; it was thought we could get a play without ladies' parts, but those we got seemed so dead alive—it may be different when professionals play them. We don't want to introduce any actresses, we shall get on better without them. One has to be so civil to such people; they expect to be treated as equals when we don't even know what kind of character they may have. They may be quite common people, you know. A few years ago two women were engaged; it really was disgraceful how young Gushington carried on with them; his friends were scandalized. He took them to the Cathedral and went out with them in the morning to the Abbey ruins, he went so far as to ask Mr. Presteign to permit him to show them through the Castle, and he ended by escorting them to the railway station, when he might have packed them off in the omnibus."

"That was only common civility, Miss Devensley," contested Aylmer warmly; "and those who are clever in this profession are received everywhere."

"But what did young Gushington know of them, they were not noteworthy I am sure. He ought to have considered his friends. Mrs. Pomfret said her husband would not have his name among the patrons again, and all the gentlemen were with him, at least those of any standing."

"I am surprised—I should never have taken exception to such civility—"

"Civility?—why everyone thought young Gushington lowered himself very much. He was sometime before he could creep into people's good graces again, and he was about to take orders—just fancy!"

"Poor fellow! he did commit himself!" exclaimed Aylmer, with well-simulated commiseration, "a good thing for him his living was family patronage."

"It was, or he would never have got a curacy even. I remember when I was a little girl there was a dreadful scandal in the town. A booth was

set up on the leas, a party of actors came, and they were here some months. There was a difficulty dislodging them; when they went, two or three respectable young men went away with them; there were some young girls who inveigled them away. One was a very nice young fellow in the Probate Office; he had been a chorister. Mr. Poleshurst had taken so much interest in him."

"Who will take the female parts?" asked Aylmer abruptly.

"I shall take one, Mr. Aylmer."

"You, Miss Devensley?"

"Why not?"

"Think of the discredit attached to an actress! Are you not a little fearful? I remember a young lady taking a part once in amateur theatricals—and uncommonly well she played her rôle—the boys in the street used to say when they saw her, 'There goes Mrs. Sprouts!'"

"But it will be so different, Mr. Aylmer. The boys will be careful how they speak to me. And you will not rank me with professional people, Mr. Aylmer. Oh, I shall be offended with you if you compare me with them."

Cicely moved away a few paces, her head erect, very much hurt apparently.

Aylmer was greatly amused.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Devensley, most humbly, if I have given such an impression. Of course a young lady in your position is far removed from such people. I think you will add to the attractiveness of the programme, lend additional interest, and gain a laudable success."

Cicely eyed Aylmer curiously. She was not quite sure whether he was really in earnest or bantering her.

Then Aylmer laughed aloud.

"I see, Miss Devensley, I shall have some difficulty in reinstating myself in your good opinion. You imagine I am not in earnest; I assure you," said Aylmer gravely, "I hope the affair will go off well. I have not a doubt that it will be successful. I am one of those who really like to see people banding together to make the winter nights less tedious."

"I shall not forgive you, Mr. Aylmer, unless you promise to help," said Cicely, somewhat mollified; "you might be prompter and superintend the scenes. There will be much to do besides speaking parts. Some one ought to be among us who has not a part; those who appear will want to recover themselves when they are off the stage. If I could only be certain of Dick being at home—if he is good for nothing, we can depend upon him there, I think."

"What lady has consented to be your *fides Achates?*"

"Oh," answered Cicely, taken aback, "the other young lady has not exactly consented, but she cannot refuse. I shall insist upon her giving her services. It would be very unkind of her persisting in a refusal. If I go in for it, it must be right for her. I have spoken to Mrs. Pomfret; she thinks Edith Heron might take the other part. But Edith is so foolish, she shrinks from appearing in public. She is always nervous at concerts. It never affects me so!"

"Ah, yes, it is trying to some natures," mused Aylmer abstractedly.

"Oh, stuff!" returned Cicely impatiently;

"what is there trying in singing a song if you know it? What care I if every one's ears are alert listening to catch a false note!"

"But don't you think the rôle widely different? A well-trained musician is not in the habit of giving false notes, nor expects to make them. An actor needs much presence of mind, if his memory does not play him tricks. There is an art in walking across the stage, much tact in a lady managing her dress, taking her attitudes—"

"Yes; but people here must not expect to get what they would scarcely obtain in town. Dick and his friends once had the *Spectre Bridegroom*. When I was in town I saw it there; I am positive our Tremminster fellows played it much better."

"First impressions have an unfortunate tendency to bias one—"

"Mr. Aylmer," cried Cicely, with assumed plaintive impatience, "you are a dreadful man, you will never give any of us a good word I know, if you happen to be among the audience. You have seen so many representations, I am sure I shall be discouraged if you are in front."

"No; it should give you a greater determination to excel, put you upon your mettle," laughed he; "and confound the sceptic."

"I can only be comfortable if you are one of us. You will take a part or help us?"

"I will think of it."

"That is what Edith Heron says. A month has gone, think of that. She cannot be thinking of it all that time. I am a decided person myself. I make up my mind from the first."

"You see, Miss Devensey, my leisure is at all times liable to be broken in upon—I might have some urgent case on hand."

"Papa or Dr. Desforges would take your place; don't meet difficulties half-way, Mr. Aylmer."

"It would be very good of them; I am sure they would oblige me."

"Then oblige me, Mr. Aylmer. They owe you a turn."

"I do not look upon it in that light, nor do they, I am sure."

"Well, Mr. Aylmer, I hope we shall have you," said Cicely persuasively, moving on a pace or two.

Glancing over her shoulder, she caught a glimpse of some one looking out at the western door of the cathedral—a hatless person, whose attitude suggested impatience.

Aylmer and Cicely were standing in a little by-street connecting the close with a parallel thoroughfare called Flaxengate. A few people passed them, but it was a short street, little frequented.

"I must not keep Mr. Pulsford waiting," continued Cicely; "perhaps I am late. He may think I have considered not to come, and get away home."

She spoke apologetically, extending the tips of her fingers. Aylmer, following her eyes, also looked across to the western door, but the organist had retreated into the shadow of the interior.

Cicely walked on quickly. Aylmer's thoughts not the most charitable, even if Cicely's schemes were likely to dovetail in with his hopes.

It was a landable passion—music. Cicely was becoming quite an enthusiast. Aylmer recalled the incident of the night when he was returning from Lady Mary Footitt's. Here was Cicely practising the organ, the organist her companion. Was not this but a cloak for appointments?

Cicely proclaimed herself a decided person; she had determined to marry this young fellow; she was making a dead set at him. She would not hesitate at trifles. He felt disgusted with her. She was certainly old enough to take care of herself. No doubt Pulsford had been told plainly by Cicely that she had an income, and Pulsford saw in Cicely a better match—hard cash was enticing. Well, if the fool was so easily led away from the gem, the paste was good enough for him. Let him have Cicely, only he might be a little more explicit in his conduct. It was not fair to Edith Heron, even if Pulsford had made no impression on her heart. He was a despicable fellow, continuing his visits to Lady Footitt's, if at the same time he was intriguing with Cicely Devensey. The fellow did not know how to break with the old love perhaps. A sudden rupture might place him in a peculiar light with his patrons. He must make himself sure too of Cicely Devensey before he relinquished Edith Heron. Once Cicely and her income secured to him, he could snap his fingers at Tremminster, individually and collectively.

"My darling," whispered Aylmer to himself, fondly, "we shall meet again, I feel sure of it. The ice is broken, I will wait patiently, the opportunity will come. I must wait. I think you will not have Mr. Pulsford's attentions much longer. There will be a crisis—he will be exposed. Poor beggar, if he really does care for her and Cicely's money is tempting him! I have not a doubt he is tempted."

He started, some few paces before him stood Edith Heron with the Dean's two little girls. As he approached her he raised his hat, and she returned his salute with the same gracious understandable smile. He would have passed on after inquiring after Lady Mary, but the younger of the two children accosted him, childlike.

"Oh sir, my ball has got into Miss Wynter's garden, and I cannot get it for the gate is locked. See, there it is!"

"Lilian!" exclaimed Edith reprovingly, "how can you ask a gentleman to recover it. If you cannot obtain your ball because the gate is locked, how can Mr. Aylmer?"

"He can climb over," contested Lilian.

"You must wait until Miss Wynter returns, or her servants."

"They have gone out, I heard mamma say so. Some horrid boy might climb over and get it if we leave it. Any one may see it," said Lilian with tearful logic. "Oh, if Mr. Aylmer could reach it with his stick. It is such a beautiful ball, aunt Eleanor gave it me."

Tears were now in the little damsel's eyes.

"I think we can recover it," responded Aylmer, gallantly, smiling at the little elf's trepidation and concern. "She sees nothing *outré* in soliciting the good offices of one of the natural succourers of her sex." Aylmer felt he would have had a *mauvais quartier d'heure* if he went away without relieving this little fairy.

"I am a Quixote," laughed he to Edith Heron, "roaming the wide world to assist forlorn princesses and deliver them from captivities, perils and misfortune. No—I must get over the *chevaux de frise* myself, for I cannot even lift Miss Lilian over, nor am I clear how I shall get her back again when she is on the other side—hero goes."

"I am sure it is very good of you to take so much trouble," said Edith Heron, half in shame, half in laughter, "pray be careful Mr. Aylmer, it must be difficult getting over those high palisades." Aylmer felt he did not cut a graceful figure in his enterprise.

"A knight must see no difficulties when a lady prays his succour," returned he.

Aylmer found it much easier getting in than getting out. Lilian's concern for him was over. As soon as Aylmer threw the painted sphere high in the air she shrieked with delight. What the people in the neighbouring houses thought of this sedate professional man's escapade it was impossible to judge. Faces appeared at many windows regarding the scaling feat curiously, but when the child recovered the ball, interest seemed to subside.

"Now every one is satisfied," said Aylmer glancing around, "several outsiders have been watching me, I should imagine preparing themselves to acquaint Miss Wynter of Mr. Aylmer's monstrous impudence."

"Lilian, you have not thanked Mr. Aylmer," said Edith reprovingly.

"I will give him a kiss," said Lilian boldly.

"That is a good recompense, love," said Aylmer, "I should have been a hard-soled being to have stood on my dignity." Then turning to Edith Heron he said, "and how is Lady Mary Footitt? I certainly have seen her out, which leads me to hope she is quite recovered—"

"She is in perfect health again. I am happy to say I can leave her without any anxiety."

"She can get out, too. We have such beautiful weather, so open for the time of the year."

"Dusk comes on early, but it is our short closing summer," replied Edith Heron, "it is only in favourable years we have such a good time, some morning we shall have a frost and our hopes will be dashed."

"You wisely look forward, Miss Heron, ah well, it is a matter of life and death to some people. I am on my way to see a young girl, consumptive, a very intelligent girl, in a rapid decline. She knows she is only kept alive with this good weather, so soon as it becomes rough and cold her life it will close, she is a delicate flower."

"Poor girl!" sighed Edith—"where does she live?"

"In Botolph's Lane."

"Perhaps I know her. I have taken the district at times for Cicely Devensey. What is her name?"

"Penman. Isabella Penman."

"Oh, I do not know her. Do you think if I went to see her I should cheer her. Davison makes beautiful jellies."

"That would be kind of you," said Aylmer, his eyes brightening, "she is a good girl, it will be a great grief to her parents losing her, though they are fully aware it would be unreasonable hoping to keep her alive, she is too far gone. She is their only child."

"I wonder if Cicely knows her. Will you give me their house?"

"I cannot give you anything more precise than Botolph's Lane. An old white house, it stands back from the pavement, there is a patch of flower garden before it."

"If I can get away to morrow, Mr. Aylmer, I will go and see her."

"I shall be glad if you will."

Aylmer thought there was more charity here than in Cicely Devensey's anxiety for the success of the Dispensary entertainment. She was too good to be mixed up with empty-hearted amateurs of Cicely Devensey's type. Too chaste and too modest to be placed before an uncouth and nondescript audience.

"I would not persuade her to take a part. I could not advise her," mused he. "If by proffering myself she would be excused—the less she has of Cicely Devensey the better for her, only poor girl, she clings to Cicely for companionship, they were children together, she tolerates Cicely, extraordinary and dogmatic and overbearing as she is, because she has no one else to fly to. I shall become desperate if I do not mind—if I could only edge in a word to put her on her guard against that two-faced girl."

It was a long pause, Aylmer occupied with such thoughts, Edith a little timid after going so far as to be interested in his patients. She made a movement to go.

"Come Alice and Lilian, we must get to the Deanery, or we shall be late for tea—Lilian you must not throw that ball again, carry it in your hand. If you throw it into a garden again, there will be no Mr. Aylmer to recover it."

"But all the gates are unlocked now," observed Lilian philosophically, "and I can run in and get it myself."

Aylmer and Edith Heron laughed at the naïve declaration. She did not value a cavalier only where there was for her an insurmountable difficulty.

"Praise to one's face is open disgrace, ah well," said Aylmer, "a good corrective is candour. I might have thought myself indispensable to airy fairy Lilian. *Au revoir,*" said Aylmer with a smile, forgetting Cicely, "I do hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again Miss Heron, if it be at Bella Penman's."

And after taking the freely proffered hand of each little maiden, could he do less than offer his to the full grown one—their eyes certainly met, but one pair fell, and Aylmer relinquishing the hand had to turn and pursue an opposite route.

CHAPTER XI.

BELLA PENMAN.

SOME few days after Aylmer's happy chance-meeting with Edith Heron—the day when he had been of infinite service to Miss Lilian Pomfret—he was arrested by a quavering voice behind him. Quavering but bluff, easily recognizable as the voice of Lady Mary Footitt.

"Ho, you there, Mr. Aylmer! It is Mr. Aylmer, is it not?"

Aylmer turned to behold the owner of the voice striking an attitude, her stick elevated horizontally; plainly speaking, she was pointing it at him. He knew to a certain extent that he was an anomaly in Tremminster, condemned to social ostracism, because of the damnable inborn *ciasness* of his race. Behind her might have been a detachment, prepared, at the old lady's command, to tear him limb from limb. Aylmer would at that moment have been easily persuaded that he had

incurred odium in some shape, of the nature of which he was yet in ignorance, resigned to be condemned without plea or counsel. It flashed across his mind he was to be taken to task for his presumption in holding the old lady's niece in conversation on that—to him—memorable day. He ought to have recollected the slight claim he had upon respectable people's consideration. Some one of those people who had watched him scaling the palisades had carried the news to Lady Mary. He was infinitely amused with the idea, agreeably inclined to accept the lecture and reproof with perfect deference. Poor old lady, no doubt she felt indignant. He advanced to meet her however.

"Ho, Mr. Aylmer," began she, uncompromisingly, "I wished to meet with you, but you walk so fast there is scarcely a chance for a poor old woman like me to overtake you, so I had to use my lungs and shout to you in the street. I hope you are not offended, if you are it is all the same, the mischief's done."

"I am not so ready to take offence, Lady Mary."

"That is well; people, now-a-days, fancy slights where none are intended. No, I don't think you are a man to take offence at an old woman's ways, if they are curt and crazy ways, and may often be unreasonable. Do you mind taking my hand?"

She had her hand at liberty after a little delay, having placed the chain of her inseparable reticule on her wrist.

"I wanted to shake hands with you and thank you for your attention to me some weeks past. I did not know until quite recently it was you who came to me. I supposed it was old Devensey."

Lady Mary had acquired a provincialism—that of calling everyone "old" with whom she was acquainted, even though the person might be twenty or thirty years younger than herself.

"I simply took your old doctor's place. Both Devensey and Desforges were out, attending together a most critical case."

"So I heard after, but I didn't know it was you. Old Devensey came late that night, I had a muddle in my head I had seen an Aylmer, it ran in my head it was Aubrey, old Aubrey!—Aubrey? Your father's name was Aubrey, too. What may be yours I don't know, and it doesn't matter. It was old Aubrey of all I had in my stupid old head, and it wasn't in such a muddle as I fancied it. I knew old Aubrey could not be so young, unless his dial and mine, like King Hezekiah's, had gone backward. You need not laugh, young man, I am not a profane old woman. Still, I don't see so much of the Aylmer in you. I know all about the family; you are a true Aylmer, aren't you?"

"I believe so; son to the Aubrey who died here."

"Nephew to the baronet, he was. Obstinate as a young man, if I recollect aright; but that is no business of mine, and I ought not to have said it. I thought he was wrong and I was much offended with him. He really did become a most sour unsociable being. When he came here I was not pleased with him."

"Lady Mary, it is a subject I don't care to dwell upon. I have always believed my father was not well used, although I am ready to admit he had his share of pride."

"And what is pride? Pride goeth before a

fall—a true old saying. Look at me, I was proud, eaten up with vanity, and while I was thinking so much about myself and my pleasures, a rascal appropriated and plundered me of my means. Now I cannot cut anything like so good a figure, and what is worse I cannot do for an individual who shall be nameless, what I intended I should do."

"I believe," said Aylmer, "my father counted the cost beforehand. Believe me Lady Mary, I am content, and if I am satisfied who else has a right to be put out. My father was nearly stranded, but he was a good parent and I don't care to hear a word against him."

"That is very fine talk—oh yes—I don't disbelieve you, although most young men would feel themselves miserably cut out of a good thing. Only there is this about it all, it is not—as the case stood with your father—as if you had been born to expectations which would not be realized. Your father took his stand, the son inherits the ground he stood upon."

"That is it exactly, Lady Mary," said Aylmer smiling.

"Well, I don't see that it will help me to dwell longer on the parent. The son has been of service to me and I tender him my thanks. It is an enemy upon whose head you may think you have heaped coals of fire."

"No, Lady Mary, we will not have that," laughed Aylmer, "I have never regarded you as an enemy, I assure you. I had no reason in the world for such an idea. You have a perfect right to know only those people whose conduct and antecedents you approve of."

"It strikes me, Mr. Aylmer, you are twitting me. I'm an old woman not very good at understanding a joke. You are a good talker and I like your face, maybe you are one who would get on better with old people than with young ones."

As the old lady walked slowly, Tom offered her his arm, but Lady Mary declined it in independent fashion, grimly, shaking her head.

"No, doctor, thank you. I can walk better with my stick, and you won't care to be bothered with an old woman like me. Offer your arm to your young lady friends, they will be glad enough of it."

"Few they be, Lady Mary, I am afraid."

"Pooh! But I hear you are a Diogenes, so I shall perhaps get a little wholesome straightforward information from you. Do you know Mr. Pulsford?"

"Know him?" queried Tom somewhat puzzled, "well, by sight I do. We are not intimate."

His last sentence caused Lady Mary to look scrutinizingly at his face.

"Not good enough company for you, eh, Mr. Aylmer?" said Lady Mary stopping. He could not determine whether reproof or anxiety stirred her. "Do you know anything of him—to his prejudice?"

"Lady Mary Footitt," said Aylmer coldly, "I do not know Mr. Pulsford sufficiently to have even an opinion of him." Aylmer felt the old lady was handling him selfishly.

"Oh young man, there is a freemasonry among you men. We women know so little of you until we learn to our cost. There is that which will not suffer you to be candid, to speak without sneer of the best, to speak the truth of the worst."

"No honest man would speak of another behind

his back. Who cares to be a slanderer, or to give his opinions?"

"Why cannot a man speak what he believes, without so much consideration for that sham honour, "she spoke sharply," if you had said I don't like the looks of him that would have been honest. Mr. Aylmer you have done me one good turn—every one sings this young fellow's praises in my ear, until it would become a relief to me to hear some disparagement. There are the Desforges, directly I mention his name they are silent, they sent him an invite to please us I should say, but their treatment of him, he certainly could not complain of it, was not cordial. He had need to be very bold to go there again. Mrs. Pomfret—a vulgar woman by the way, whom one is forced to know, because she is the Dean's wife, you see—has him, she thinks much of him. But being a vulgar woman you will say her word does not recommend him greatly I thought if you knew him—"

"I don't, Lady Mary. I have no business to pass judgment on people, on a person I have never spoken to. I have not a right to have an opinion good or bad."

"And that is candour, fie, Mr. Aylmer, to a poor old woman too. It is a matter of great importance to me. I have seen nothing wrong about him, but somehow I don't feel comfortable sometimes as I should like to be. What is the use of beating about the bush, every one knows, and I don't want my poor girl to make a mistake. I know he is of no family, and perhaps recollecting that makes him so anxious to please, for he always strikes me as being on his good behaviour. He never contradicts me even, and when people let me have my own way always, I invariably end in suspecting them. But doctor, I shall not ask *you* any more questions of the kind and," said she, stopping at her own door, "I shall not ask you in, I have something to do, and I cannot to-day be bothered with callers, idlers I call them."

Tom quite understood that Lady Mary with all her gratitude was not over anxious to inscribe his name on her list.

"You can call another day you know—"

"Thank you, Lady Mary," replied Tom gravely.

"You see," said Lady Mary gravely, half relenting, touched with a shade of inward shame and remorse, feeling she was not behaving over well to this young fellow; "my niece—well there is a children's party to night at the Deanery. Edith will be home presently, much earlier than she is accustomed to get home—and she is going back. I wish to see how Davison is getting on with her dress, you know we are so poor we have to be our own dressmakers and laundresses. I don't want the child to be flustered or put out, everything must be ready to her hands—so you will excuse me I know."

"Oh, certainly, Lady Mary." There was a tinge of bitterness in the young man's voice which did not escape Lady Mary. But his ill-temper arose from the conviction that the unspeakable Pulsford would be there, countenanced by the Dean's wife, hanging on Edith's skirts. What an opportunity he had had for prejudicing Lady Mary, but had he availed himself of the opportunity he would have been ashamed of himself afterwards. Best to let things take their course after all.

"You know my room, perhaps, is in the greatest confusion," said Lady Mary appealingly.

"Oh, Lady Mary, make no more excuses, I quite comprehend."

Aylmer walked moodily down the street, his latest castle was tottering at its base. Meeting that ubiquitous person who had succeeded so well in currying favour with the Dean's wife, it is shocking to relate that the glance Aylmer gave the unfortunate fellow, was vindictive, so nearly approaching a scowl, that the offending musician quailed before him, a circumstance which caused Aylmer to harbour a yet deeper feeling of animosity.

Aylmer was making his way to Botolph's Lane. The poor girl whose case he had casually mentioned to Edith Heron, had had a relapse and his visit was simply one to give her friends, after she was gone, the satisfaction that she had not been neglected. He passed alleys and courts that were a disgrace to quaint Tremenster. Sometimes those old habitations, relics of a past age, harbour squalid inmates, and become fever dens. The sanitary authority cannot always reach them. When people are too inherently immobile to think of themselves, sanitary measures are often only a stirring up of fearful contagion, which affects the clean as well as the unclean. Fever lurks in the house as well as in the sewer. The house to which Aylmer bent his steps was an oasis in a desert of squalor. They were people who yet remembered the green fields and balmy air; they had not forgotten their orderly, cleanly country ways. No doubt the old-fashioned flowers in the front garden were transplantations from a more congenial soil, and though out of bloom, they yet made the house appear pleasanter and brighter than any of its neighbours. Aylmer had been quick to discern these people had had their trials, that town life had been a last resource, and that they now believed that their darling Bella was the victim to the change.

In the sick room some late roses emitted a soft, sweet perfume. As Aylmer's eyes rested upon them, the girl's face was animated with a faint smile, and her eyes wandered to the mother's face with an intelligent meaning in them. Pitifully he regarded both, the usual stereotyped enquiries coming from his lips mechanically. Of what avail were his questions, his inquiries, if his instructions had been carried out, whether she could yet take his medicine, the girl was beyond the reach of human skill. Aylmer spoke in soft and tender accents, endeavouring to cheer the mother as well as interest the girl.

"You are fond of flowers, Bella. The roses are very good. But you have a little garden ground; I have noticed that it is always kept neat."

"Bella was fond of the garden," said the mother sadly, "it reconciled us to the house—the little patch of ground. Oh, we were accustomed to such a different house—it was a home, but my husband was bound for a man, and he was a defaulter and it quite ruined us. But the roses are not our roses, sir, that is to say, they have not come out of our garden."

"The young lady sent them," said Bella faintly.

Aylmer had forgotten for the moment his few minutes' talk with Edith Heron, and the interest he had excited in Edith's breast for this poor girl. He looked at Bella with such a puzzled air that

Bella took a faint alarm, judging she had unconsciously taken a liberty in alluding to this young lady. Very sensitive was Bella. She looked towards Aylmer timidly, she had imagined the good doctor and the amiable young lady were hero and heroine in the romance every young girl weaves and believes in.

"I do not quite understand"—said Aylmer, looking so kindly upon her that Bella was reassured—"what young lady? It was very kind of her."

"I thought you knew sir," answered Bella in a whisper, "but she has not been here any time when you have happened to come. Only she told me you had spoken to her of me, and she has been to sit with me. On Sunday night she came, so that father and mother could go to church, they had not been for so long a time. I begged them to go, for she had promised to come. She got here before they left me."

"And some beautiful jelly she brought with her, and she said she would send wine, but I thanked her and told her someone had been so good to us, sending Bella wine through you, sir," said Bella's mother. "I wish we knew who it was that we could thank them. She didn't ask who sent it, but I told her we didn't know who it was, it came from someone who knew Bella needed it. I should like to thank them, sir."

"When I tell them what you say, it will be sufficient for them."

"They are too good to us I am sure."

"People who have so much money have a right—are commanded to help their—neighbours," stammered Aylmer.

It was a very poor fiction. The wine was out of the cellar of an obese innkeeper, Aylmer's most lucrative patient, a man whose attacks were periodical, owing to his inordinate appetite and his apparent inability to learn wisdom by experience. It was to the great satisfaction of mine host that his doctor was so well disposed as he termed it, "to take it out," meaning his attendance fees.

"I think," said Aylmer quietly, "I do know the young lady, it had slipped my memory, we were conversing of district visitors, I had no sooner mentioned Bella's illness, than she proffered to come if I thought it would be agreeable to you——"

"She has been in Botolph's Lane before, sir, hasn't she Bella—I beg your pardon, sir, if I am interrupting—Bella remembered her."

Bella nodded and leaned back, not wearily, but as if some happy recollection had occurred to her. Bella's mother went on talking.

"Another young lady used to come, this one took her place for a time, and she was better liked. The other young lady was a nice young lady in her way, but ordering like, you'll excuse me mentioning it, sir, but it doesn't go down with poor folk, and some not only rebel, but they'll not care what they say. But this one didn't come many times, and the first that came didn't come much after, she got tired of us we think; some of the men, they ought to be 'shamed of themselves, were rude, and it is an old lady that comes now, but we should all have been more glad if it had been this young lady who comes to see Bella. She was so quiet and always seemed shy of going into people's houses without being asked."

"Yes," said Aylmer smiling, "I have reason to believe she is a very thoughtful young lady. I told her her company would be more beneficial to Bella than my medicine. She really surprised me, she was so prompt in determining to come, and she has fulfilled her promise. I really did not ask her to come," declared Aylmer.

"It was her own goodness of heart," said Bella's mother with tears in her eyes. "There is never a day, if she cannot come herself, she sends some one to inquire after Bella. One day a boy in buttons came, a saucy boy he was, I thought at first it might be your boy, until he said 'Miss Heron's compliments, and how was Isabella today?' I asked him whose boy he was, and he said he was at the Deanery, and not bound to do Miss Heron's bidding, but he was always willing. I told him he was a good lad, but he had some boyish impudence to me, and laughed in my face."

"I am much obliged to her myself, but I shall not tell her so," said Aylmer abstractedly.

"We told her to come in here, she need not trouble to knock—for sometimes I am out of the way, and she has got to know Bella's room."

"There is someone below now," said Bella, her sensitive ear quick to every sound, "mother!" Bella's eyes had a world of meaning in them. She evidently surmised who it must be. Unconsciously she endeavoured to rise.

"Lie still, my darling," said the mother, "I am going down."

"I must go too," said Aylmer, as if in a sudden hurry, "I must go too—good-day, Bella!"

"Good-day, Mr. Aylmer," returned Bella wistfully. She looked as if she wished to say something, but did not know how to frame her thought.

(To be continued.)

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

A RT tired, dear ?
I clasp my hands about her fair bowed
head.

This is our twilight time—I oft have said,
Soul unto soul goes forth in these still hours—
But she, my little girl, is tired to-night,
The rippling laugh is hushed, the sunny light
Merged into shadow, as the purple bars,
Far off, have faded in a sea of grey;
God grant her sunshine has but passed as they.

Wilt thou not speak,
Beloved, to assuage my dark'ning fears ?
Say, dearest, what has caused these bitter tears.
Is 't weariness ? Thou hast not toiled all day
Among earth's busy workers, that the heart
Be sick to death of all its daily part,
And I have striv'n no sorrow cross thy way.
The soft lips quiver as I murmur low,
Art sad, dear heart, or what hath changed thee
so ?

Changeful and clear,
As vesper chiming o'er a summer sea,
As the strange echoes of a minstrelsy—
Unseen but felt, in cadence wondrous deep,
Comes her dear voice, and then I know mine own
Hath gone from me, my white blush rose alone
No longer blooms, the soul awakes from sleep.
Nor tremble I, as those light girlish feet
Pass o'er the place where child and woman meet.

What stranger hand

Hath knocked, oh, little one, at thy heart's door?
Hath paused and entered there in evermore?
Who wears my flower to-day, as guerdon bright?
A whisper—Ah! I trow my child's fair face
Hath won a soul Arthurian in its grace.
He who hath bravely aye espoused the right;
But turn I, lest she see the blinding tears,
How hard it is to loose the tie of years!

Is it so long

Since first you dwelt in childhood's golden lands,
Wouldst leave them, dear? Too swift life's
ebbing sands

Fall 'twixt Time's hour-glass to the aisles of
change.

Was 't yester 'eve I crooned a lullaby

To thee, nor thought of days which seemed to lie
So far, far distant. But we onward range
Not all forgetful of the journey's length,
Which we have traversed in our youth-tide
strength.

I steal away

And leave my darling, with her tender eyes
Love-lit, yet speechful in her shy surprise,
To dream of him who hath my treasured throne.
The old, old story, when the prince hath come
The maiden riseth from her sleep-wrapt home,
And so I yield her up, my jewel, mine own,
Half wond'ring then if other mothers feel
As I, or if in truth the tale be real.

FRANCES HURRELL.



THE LYKE-WAKE DIRGE OF THE NORTH CONTREE.

BY E. STREDDER.

Where wast thou bred? where wast thou born?

Where or in what countrie?—

In North of England I was born

(It needed him to lie).—*Ballad of Auld Mairland.*

AMONG the many relics of ancient Scandinavian faith and practice, lingering beyond old Humber's northern banks, the Lyke-wake Dirge is not the least interesting.

The Lyke-wake, or watch by the dead, held its ground over either side of the border, throughout the district once included in the kingdom of Northumbria.

Softened and adopted by the twilight Christianity so often found beneath the cord and cowl of the "north contree" friar, it even survived the iconoclasm of the Reformation, and was still chanted by many a lonely widow in Yorkshire dale and border fell. One by one its traditional observances fell into disuetude. When the half-shut door was no longer dreaded, the candle still burnt beside the bier.

But now the very words have passed out of our vocabulary. Lyke, a corpse, survives only in the lich-gate of the church, the gate through which the coffin is carried. Although "a sleep" is likely to remain long current in the Queen's English, the answering phrase, "a wake," is transferred to the feast which accompanied it. A description of the lyke-wake of the north contree was found in an old MS., and has been preserved by Ritson,

and copied by Scott in his "Border Minstrelsy." It is as follows:—

"When any dieth, certaine women sing a song to the dead bodies, recyting the journey that the partie deceased must goe; and they are of beleife (such is their fondnesse) that once in their lives it is good to give a pair of new shooes to a poor man, for as much as after this life they are to pass barefoote through a great lannde full of thornes and furzese, except, by the meryts of the almes aforesaid, they have redemeed the forfeyte; for at the edge of the lannde an old man shall meet them with the same shooes that were given by the partie when he was lyving; and after he hath shodde them, dismisseth him to go through thick and thin, without a scratch or scalle."

Tradition also points to a belief, that between death and burial the door which opens to the spirit-land was but half shut. It was long whispered among village crones, the white witch, and wise woman, that where foul play was suspected there were certain rites and spells by which the corpse can be made to speak and tell the manner of its death. Amongst these rites setting the door half open held a conspicuous place.

The possibility of this ghostly communication was a thought of dread "to turn the red cheek pale," and no careless hand must leave the door ajar while the dead lay within.

These were guardant fears which women sedulously nurtured. There can be no doubt that they exerted a beneficial influence in a superstitious and lawless age, deepening the conviction that blood will out, and tending "to fence round the human life." To estimate their influence, we must remember how often the bloody fray and the midnight murder eluded the arm of justice.

In the old ballad of "Barthrum's Dirge," a fragment of which alone survives, when the murdered man was found

They make a bier of the broken bough,
The sauch and the aspin grey,
And they bore him to the Lady chapel,
And waked him there all day.

It might naturally be supposed that the fire and candlelight, which formed such an essential part of the Lyke-wake ceremony, were designed for the comfort of the watchers; for it was a melancholy and dreary vigil—the last task exacted from woman's fidelity; but in the old Yorkshire Lyke-wake dirge, as given by Aubrey in the Lansdowne MS., we find they were provided for the comfort of the departed one to guide him through the thorny waste.

OLD YORKSHIRE LYKE-WAKE DIRGE.

This ean night, this ean night,
Every night and awle,
Fire and flete and candlelight,
And Christ receive thy sawle.
When thou from hence dost pass away,
Every night and awle;
To Whinny Moor thou comest at last,
And Christ receive thy sawle.
If ever thou gavest hosen or shoon,
Every night and awle;
Sit thee down and put them on,
And Christ receive thy sawle.
But if hosen and shoon, thou never gave nean,
Every night and awle;
The whinnes shall prick thee to the bare bean,
And Christ receive thy sawle.

In these verses we have unquestionably the fading relics of a pagan faith, for which the monkish prayer, "And Christ receive thy sawle" has been substituted for the more ancient refrain among the worshippers of Odin—

To guide thee to Walhalle.

The intermediate state, "the whinny moor," is not the purgatory of the mediæval church, although the two ideas would easily blend, and the one might tend to originate the other. The arrow —i.e., "the flete," which our neighbours across the channel still call *fletche*, seems early to have lost its place, whilst the candle was perpetuated—

For every knight of brave St. Clair
Was buried with candle, with book, and with bell.

Unquestionably "the shoon," which occupy the foreground among the funeral emblems of the dirge, are also the most ancient. We must turn to other records of the Teutonic races, to understand their full significance. From the vivid pictures of Icelandic Saga, and the many relics discovered in the graves of the old Norseman, we ascertain the importance they attached to the preparations for the journey to the spirit-land.

The horse was buried with the chieftain, as the horse-shoes and animal bones so often found in the warrior's tomb clearly show. The sea-king was coffined in his ship. In the old poem of Beowulf, brought from the fatherland and rewritten among our wild Northumbrian hills long years before Bede and Alfred gave us history and the Bible, we hear of the dead hero's corse, placed with all funeral honours within his own galley, and then left to the mercy of the winds and waves. So the ship was started on the death voyage, from which there was no returning.

The "Vilkina Saga" also confirms this custom, for it tells how Wieland hollowed out the trunk of a fallen tree, in which he shut himself and his mystic treasure, and so floated over the sea to another land. In Lapland, where many an ancient Scandinavian custom was long kept up, the dead were buried in the trunk of trees or in their sledges, a practice embodying the old idea of preparation for a long and painful journey, either by sea or land.

It is said that the Greenlanders bury their dead in boats and float them out to sea to the present day.

If the sledge, the galley, and the war-horse were thus provided for the death journey of the mighty, the death-shoe was found upon the foot of meeker men, who were supposed to walk the perilous pathway to the spirit-land.

This was the *todtenschuh* of the Germanic tribes, i.e., the deadmen's shoe. The *helske* of the Norsemen. The hell shoe, not the hell of later ages, but hela or hades.

For this funeral custom we must turn to the *Gisla Sursonnar Saga*. Here we find, "When the body of Vestein was being prepared for the tomb, Thorgrim, who had slain him, drew near and said: 'It is the custom to provide men with death-shoes to tread the path to Valhalla—this office I will render to Vestein.' This done, he added, 'I know not how to bind on the death-shoe if these come undone.'"

Vestein's lyke-wake lasted several days. This

custom of burying the dead with shoes or sandals seems to have been kept up as late as the fifteenth century, modified, no doubt, as we find it in the Lyke-wake dirge.

It is mentioned by the old liturgist, John Beleth, in the twelfth century, and again by Durandus, bishop of Mende.

The *chaussure* (boots) were upon the feet of Bernard, grandson of Charlemagne, when his tomb was opened at Milan, 1638. When, in more recent times, the skeleton of bishop Lyndewode was found, there were also sandals on the feet. In all probability he was buried about 1450.

The most ancient description of shoes, such as were worn by the Jews, were made of leather, linen, rush or wood, and were tied with thongs which passed under the sole of the foot. It would appear from the words of Thorgrim that these death-shoes were bound on the foot in a similar fashion.

Fire-flints and steel have been found in many a Norseman's grave, from the snowy wastes of Lapland to the grassy downs of our own country. And in some ancient tumuli recently investigated in the Black Forest in Suabia, a wooden candlestick was discovered with the flint beside it; a bow like the English long bow, but the arrows which accompanied it were headless.

The intimate connection of the hearth-fire with the worship of Thor is clearly shown by many a tradition. It was a protection from evil spirits. It preserved the house from lightning. At births and deaths alike it must be kept burning. Even in Christian days it was never suffered to go out until the new-born child was baptised.

Only one tree coffin has been found in England, near Grishorpe in Yorkshire. The termination "thorpe" always marks a Danish settlement. But they have been discovered on the continent from the woody banks of the Danube to the broad levels of the north of France. In many a Black Forest village the coffin still retains its name of the death-tree. An oak or pear-tree seems to have been selected. The trunk was split in two, sometimes unequally. The axe which felled the massive oak served to hollow out the heart of the tree in which the corpse with its accompanying relics was placed. Sometimes the cavity has been carefully lined with moss. The two parts of the tree were then refitted and securely pegged together; the crack being filled up and sealed as it were with an adhesive clay. No trace of the use of saw or chisel has yet been discovered. On the outside the bark was stripped off and any roughness chipped away.

On the upper part of these log coffins, if they contained the skeleton of a man, two snakes were carved in rude relief from some white kind of wood.

Their tails met in the centre, whilst their horned heads projected at either end, and served as handles. These serpents were no doubt intended to represent Ofnir and Sfancer, the sacred serpents of Odin, who were supposed to guard the Scandinavian hades.

The serpent was also regarded among the Germanic tribes, as it was amongst the ancient Egyptians, as the emblem of the soul, synonymous with life, health, and immortality. We find it reappear among the legendary folk-lore that was born of the worship of Odin, as the mystic dragon, the inevitable guardian of some hidden treasure

It is a remarkable fact that a Chinese coffin even now is either a hollow tree, or else it is made to resemble one in shape and size. The lid is carefully cemented down. Very hard and costly wood is usually preferred. There is a resemblance also in their funeral rites. At the moment of death, doors and windows are flung wide open. The "keen" or dirge is raised with a wild howl of anguished importunity to entreat the parting spirit to return to its home of clay?

Fire crackers are let off at intervals, to frighten away the evil spirits, who might be hovering round to seize upon the vanishing soul; whilst the ever-burning incense fills the room. The body also is dressed as in life, to prepare it for the grave. When the coffin is carried to the tomb, piles of fruit and cakes, and the effigies of a roast pig and goat, are sacrificed to the manes of the dead. Imitations of his clothes, his pleasure-boat, and many other personal belongings, are burned beside the grave. This is regarded as the surest method of supplying the wants of the departed in the new world, upon which he is entering. The ceremony concludes with a feast upon the food of the sacrifice, ere the mourners return to their homes.

These coincidences seem to point us to a common origin, for the Scandinavian and Buddhist superstitions. The *swastika*, the sacred mark of the Buddhist, is obviously identical with the hammer of Thor, but into this interesting question it is impossible to enter in so brief a paper.

One other relic of Scandinavian custom was long retained in our midst, in the selection of the cross-road for the burial-place of the suicide. The cross-road was usually the chosen spot for the altars of Thor and Odin. It was the place of execution for all criminals doomed to die. For criminals were regarded as sacrifices to the god whose law they had broken. When the altar was thrown down, the gallows were erected in its stead.

In the scorn of death so recklessly cherished by the pagan Dane, suicide was regarded as a far more honourable alternative than the slow decay of old age or lingering illness. When courage, driven to desperation and shorn of its better half, endurance, laid violent hands upon itself, the grave it sought so recklessly was denied it in the consecrated ground of the church. The once sacred precincts of the pagan altar were naturally chosen for the resting-place of one, whose last mad act proclaimed him heathen at heart. In a later age, the choice of this spot seemed only designed to rank the suicide with the criminal. But when the practice arose, it was simply giving the suicide heathen burial. The horse-shoe that was laid upon the breast confirms this opinion.

The horse and the hawk were sacrificed to Odin. The special virtue, the good luck, so long supposed to reside in the horse-shoe, is thus explained. Therefore, according to the rites of pagan days, the horse-shoe laid upon the breast carried with it the blessing of Odin.

—♦—

THE PALACE.

A LONDON BALLAD.

BITTER night,
With rain and sleet
Sweeping right
Through square and street—
Bitter night,
The Palace full;
Life and light,
And no one dull!

Cold without,
'Tis warm within;
Best of "stout,"
And best of gin:
Come and go
And drink and pay,
Even so
Another day.

Pretty place!
The mirrors glance
Face to face,
And some askance;
Music here,
And singing there;
Not a tear,
And not a care!

Nothing sad:
It couldn't be!
Good and bad
And all agree:—
Lift the cup,
And let it shine!
Drink it up,
God made it—wine!

Dark outside,
The street's a stream—
Black its tide,
And black its gleam:
Many drear,
And many dull—
Pleasant here,
The Palace full!

Happy cup
The people quaff!
Drinking up,
It makes them laugh:—
Right or wrong,
To-morrow—there!
Life is long,
And what of care?

Money spent?
What recks it? Go!
Money's lent,
You ought to know:
Jacket's gin,
And stockings stout—
Warm within,
And cold without!

Send it round—
The Palace glass—
Bright and sound,
For lad and lass!

Soothing life
Where love looks fair :—
Man and wife
Have quarrelled there !

Send it round,
And round ; and, then,—
Reason drown'd—
Send round again !
Night is drear,
The streets are dull,
Heaven's here,
The Palace full !

WILLIAM TWAMLEY.

—♦—♦—♦—♦—
“THE PRINCE OF FABLE.”

A STORY OF THE AUTHOR OF “ATALA.”

By the Author of “A Modern Minister.”

—♦—♦—♦—♦—
SUMMER.

SUSSEX : the year seventeen hundred and ninety-nine : the Royal Palace at Brighton. Characters : the Prince Regent and Prince Augustus, Mrs. Fitzherbert, Lady Jersey, Eugénie de Beauharnais, Mrs. Siddons, the Rev. Sydney Smith, Mr. Fox, the Right Hon. George Canning, Joseph Haydn, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Grenville, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Lord Barrymore, Lord Onslow, Mr. Walter Scott, and, quite in the shade, a person of whom nobody took any notice—the Secretary to His Highness the Regent.

In the bijou drawing-room that opened to the lawn. Evening. Gleam of jewels, twinkle of lights, sheen of amber satin girt about with cord of gold, pale splendour of silver, and panels of ivory-bound mirrors that peopled the little room with a gay crowd.

Without, in the gardens, a few lanterns beneath an awning of silk. Through the trees could be seen the glimmer of lights in the drawing-rooms of Marlborough House, and a short distance beyond the gorgeously appointed “Castle.” Beyond that, the stately rising of the moon above the sea.

Late harvest-time away in Downland valleys, from whence arose the incense of fruits and flowers, mown grass, and corn in a camp of sheaves, borne along with the bloom from off the sea and the sweet sharp savour of the heights to this garden of trees and flowers, and this faint eastern room with its clouds of attar of roses.

Prince George was puffing his not over-aristocratic features with a dainty lace handkerchief while chatting informally with Mrs. Siddons, one of Mrs. Fitzherbert’s mischievous puppies scratching at the gems on his garter. That lady herself, not in the best of moods, was pettishly imploring Haydn to play one of his *morceaux* on the new fashionable instrument. The composer, who happened to be the lion for the evening, had his dreamy vacant gaze upon the individual of whom nobody took any notice. The secretary, with eyes cast down, a seemingly uninterested piece of furniture, was in reality listening with the greatest intensity to Fox, who was expressing a strong

opinion upon revolutions in general and that of France in particular, to the secretary’s fair countrywoman, for by this it is doubtless suspected that the obscurity in nobody’s thought was our friend of the manuscript.

Sarah Siddons had confirmed his confidence, had used her influence, and her recommendation weighty as a princess’s, and obtained him the post of comptroller of the privy purse (in which never anything was) and writer-in-chief to an army of duns, whose onslaught it was his privilege to be continually forestalling.

It was not a dignified office, but he had laid dignity aside for a while. Moreover, there was no one visiting at this palace on the coast likely to remember the handsome young face that had shone like a sun upon the court where the glory had scarcely paled of Racine, Molière, Corneille, La Fontaine, Le Sage, Fénelon, Voltaire, and the brilliant wits and men of genius Marie Antoinette delighted to assemble at Versailles. And yet, was it fancy, or were the dark glittering eyes of the accomplished child in whom Fox, with all his wisdom, saw more than in any there present, watching the young secretary with the scrutiny of remembrance ? Once, when hunting, he had been the guest for an hour of Alexander, Viscomte de Beauharnais, and the little Eugénie had herself poured the red wine from the great gold flagon. But that was long ago—it seemed an age—with continents, and trouble and bloodshed, and his lily Queen’s foul massacre, and the idyl in *anétiste* of Louis Antoine Henri de Bourbon, and all the autocratic charm of crowned days of the *ancien régime*, all between that and this—and did the child remember ? A face for an hour—and unforgotten ! It was no common memory, that of this sweet young girl ; her intellect it was that later on reigned pre-eminent in Europe, the pride of her Consular and Imperial Courts, when as wife and mother of Bonaparte she impressed a world. That memory would never forget.

“Then you will not concede, M. Fox, that the Revolution is one of the grandest phases of national history ?”

“I will not, dear mademoiselle, even to win one of those approving smiles for which I would brave its fury !”

“Ah, *méchant* ! You flatter me, monsieur, and yet speak of my approval ! Methought your Prince *excellantissime* ; by your turn of speech the Dauphin will suffer.”

Fox looked over to the debonair and smiled quietly. The girl was playing with a tiny thickly-gemmmed bracelet.

“You could not revolutionize in England, you are too phlegmatic : your *Lit de Justice* is a bed of roses !”

“Not always !” replied the other drily ; “do not judge by our Prince of Sybaris !”

“I have read history, monsieur ; at least, history of the *Académie*. ”

“You are fond of history ?” She nodded playfully. “History may return the compliment !”

“But really I think I am fonder of Ninon de l’Enclos. *En passant*, monsieur ; have you read the *Essay upon Revolutions*, lately published in Paris ? The nation is *insensé* over it, no such excitement was ever caused in our land by a writing. Oh, it is glorious !” And the girl clapped her hands with admiration that sent the flash of

diamonds over to where the secretary stood in the shade, placing a portfolio in order.

"No!" remarked Charles James Fox thoughtfully; "I did not suppose it as bad as that."

"Bad, monsieur! It is *délicieux*, such fire—it inspires; one lives! Amazons and heroes are born of it! Oh, it is *tranchant*! If I only knew where that fine M. Chateaubriand is in hiding, I would send him my best, my sole kiss!"

The sharp sparkle of her eyes followed on trail of the flashes, and strangely near to the mark.

"I heard the young man had disgraced his order by writing some such pamphlet; and his family staunch Monarchs, too! It is inconsistent, and preposterously irregular."

"It is said he loves the Republic less than the Court, *parbleu!* It was written in pique, doubtless, but it is none the less grand. Ah, monsieur, that the essay should have been a death-blow! *Sans Dieu rien!*"

"I do not think I apprehend, mademoiselle?"

Stooping above the portfolio, quivering in every member, he who had written the essay in a London garret for the price of a meal, heard the answer,—

"The old Count, his father, and his sister have perished on the guillotine, the Chateaubriand property is confiscated by the Republic, his mother, in the dungeons of Paris, had the essay thrown to her by a *gendarme*, she saw the name of her son one, as she thought, with their enemies, and the shock killed her."

Tears were in the girl's eyes, but these were quickly dashed aside, for a ghastly face confronted her where the secretary had fallen upon his knees, gasping.—

"Unsay those words, Eugénie! Oh, tell me it is not thus! It cannot be! My poor, poor mother, had she but known the truth!"

"Gracious!" murmured Prince George to Mrs. Siddons, replacing the perfumed lace. "A scene, and in the palace! How very unpleasant! Whatever shall we do? What can Maria be thinking of to permit it? Do go and see what your *protégé* is up to!"

"Not yet," she replied with characteristic composure. "Do not stir, the young man is suffering—"

"So am I. What the devil can Mr. Haydn think?"

"You are growing selfish, Prince——"

"It isn't that, my dear creature; but if the young fellow is subject to fits, you might have mentioned it, because I am often alone with him; indeed, looking upon him as rather superior, I have treated him confidentially. But, just fancy, if he was taken like that when alone with myself! Heavens! I should fly through the Pavilion roof. Do ask him to go into the garden. Think—my guests!"

So excessive was the heat that summer evening within doors, it is probable the offender would have found it equally pleasant in the garden. Fortunately, at the moment Haydn was beginning a symphony.

"I don't care for the music, but these people do, and Maria will humour. I understand Mr. Haydn was at Windsor last week when you were there. Ah, Mr. Scott, making an historical note? You'll become a regular Dryasdust over your history!"

This to Walter Scott, whom the Prince had caught writing upon his tablets.

"Always reminds me of writing one's epitaph!" remarked the Rev. Sydney Smith; whereat Brinsley Sheridan thought the comment *apropos*.

"For look, Prince, our young French friend is going in for walking tragedy!"

The Prince induced his languid eyeballs to revolve, and saw the cause of all this interest standing with fixed and stricken air, then walking to and fro with short and rapid strides, insensible, in his sublime grief, to those present or their opinions.

Now, with all his intensity of selfishness, this Prince was a grateful man; it was his one, his chief virtue, and, as it chanced, he was grateful to this secretary for the not unimportant service of having once saved his life, which happened something after this fashion:—

With a strange palace, the talk of many a distant Court, and a stranger life, the theme of every vulgar tongue, the Regent loved adventure at such times as he could arouse himself from his depths of sumptuous luxury; not well enough, mark you, to wet his feet over, or scorch the perfumed curls withal, but with an easy sort of love, sated by satin chairs, or high-bred steeds, or carriages redolent as fragrant satchets.

Out hunting one fine day, our Highness came upon a farmstead owned by an honest yeoman, whose daughter was passing fair. Inflammable as was he of many wives, this Prince designed to hunt that track again: once more he rode by accident into the farmer's straw-yard, and was mightily interested over pigs and poultry. Taking of the farmer's daughter a mug—a hideous stone old English mug, which he appraised as classic—he dropped the thing with slippery fingers, and the damsels, who had it of her mother, dead since last the corn was housed, began to pipe her eyes and whine prettily over the back of the dun cow, while the Prince was daintily brushing a fly from his sleek steed's mane with the rose almond the crowd would call his little finger-nail. Then he began to console her; and she, used to Giles's rough sympathy, gave in to George pretty readily, dried eyes, crumpled the corner of her Arcadian apron, plumed her soft brown hair, and looked askant at Hanover—comely, high of colour with his long ride. She simpered a bit, and—er—would he walk in and rest? Her father was at Lewes, but he was very welcome! Yes, he would, being conveniently fatigued; and he hailed Giles, scowling over by the barn, to hold his mare. He was landowner himself, he said, and understood all about that sort of thing, meaning markets, nearest to which was marquerie. So the little donkey thought him a farmer's son from yonder behind the hills, and was all attention, and cakes and ale, while jealous Giles was watching by the jessamine. And had she seen the palace at Brighton, the big town in the valley? Oh, yes, and come home to dream of it, till eggs were addled and the churning spoiled. And would she like to see the stately rooms within? Clasping of the hands at that, drawing in of breath, and opening wide of eyes with scarce believing wonder. Yes, he was serious, would manage it, knew the butler, could smuggle her in, and show her something of the wonders; but it must be after dark, lest the great people knew; and Giles still listening all amongst the jessamine. And then this puissant Prince proposed to meet her on the shore by night—the walk along the under-cliff from

Rottingdean upon a fine June night was very pleasant—and other rubbish eagerly listened to; and Giles behind the water-butt all eyes and ears. No she wouldn't, couldn't, looked shy, and ended with a timid little nod! And when he came forth spruce and debonair, with a rose of Giles's giving to the girl placed in his button-hole, that speculative ploughman stood beside the steed, hoof in hand, staring down on the silver shoe, all amongst the ducks and drakes. The Prince jauntily tossed him a coin for his pains, and rode gracefully up the hill.

That part ended thus.

Now Giles worked all the day and said him nought, but all day was a-plotting; over the mangel and the straw, over fallow ridges, over threshing (with a mighty vengeance on the flail) —always plotting.

Royalty over dinner forgets his new-found beauty until, as it haps, somebody toasts, as they used to toast; and all on the sudden he must go—write letters—State matter—courier to Windsor, and other diplomatic lying.

The pluck of his race plumed this Prince as he stumbled down the cliff-side leading beachwards; the long-drawn, foam-edged beach. A haze or sheen of tender yellow light, with no moon or soft-eyed star upon the heavens, the ancient boulders stretching away composedly as some savannah of the west. At least thus had often thought the poet-secretary to the Prince, when on nocturnal wanderings bent—his happiest time, for it was his own; and he had thought of islands set in watery wastes, the coasts of which are luminous with mystic fires of the summer night; of Thibet timber which floating down the Auk startles the lovers of Cashmere by lighting up the weird rushes upon the shore; of the untrodden forests—recesses of which are bright as Arabian halls of a million lights; of leagues of bouquets of fire, woven with the underbloom of prairie solitudes; of shadowy ways of Ooraghun jungles where the beast's eyes cower before fiercer splendour; and of other scenes brought back by the line of fretting, luminous, passionately mournful and majestic breakers.

Prince George splashed on with characteristic obstinacy, denouncing the moist uneven passage in his roundest terms, looking far ahead for flutter of a sail, for vanity said she would be sure to wave her handkerchief on catching sight of him. So on, crunching cockles on the midnight prow, up to his knees in white feathers of the foam; and Giles, from the farmer's straw-yard, lurking within shadow of the cliff.

Then with a rush he is down on the gallant without delay.

"Now, look thee here, Mister Hunter! ye come a-creeping about our yard like the stoart arter chickens, and maister he says all such are to be snared or shot!"

He doubled the hard brown hands, which his sweetheart had thought so coarse since morning; but the Prince had not learned of those prime boxers, Jemmy Lane and Co., for nothing; and, with attar from the lace upon the breast, there was big, brave courage, that would lay the fellow low for his insult. So these two fell a-fighting.

All upon the trailed wet weed, he of the palace enjoying it rather, and sending flashes (not of starlight) swift, below the farmer's thatch: leav-

ing crimson on the rocks, and an honest rough one, with a face upturned to sullen clouds, and a bruised right hand stretched out to sea.

Well, then, the girl must come, enwrapped in woollen shawl, a trifle timorous, but thinking of the eyes that looked down into hers while she had leaned an elbow on the old dun cow. Then she sees the thing upon the rocks, and he who knew the butler of the palace, posed elegantly by it, with the cold, treacherous, fawning sea at foot; and she goes on her knees, keen to the fright of a lost life, a lost love; faithful, if untutored, she lifts the shock head that all the hill-side thought well to trust, and bitterly bewails him.

Then the man of the throne stoops with infinite gentleness, and binds his scented silk and lace about the ploughman's bruises; and she likes him the better for that, but with a safe sisterly liking that does no harm to any. 'Tis not for long when Giles comes to, dazed and bewildered, and sees the arm of stoat round his sweethearts waist. Then Giles is subtle, and takes out his knife, which he opens with his teeth, and edging nearer—they still talking by the winkle beds—he makes a sudden stroke behind the Prince, which would have ended his royal estate, but that the arm was stayed by a loyal hand. The poet-secretary on his wanderings was there in time to save the life of Hanover.

Hence the gratitude we told of. So he walked over to the young man, the centre of the group of courtiers, and offered him his hand with a grace others might imitate, but never equal. The unfortunate looked up gratefully, with eyes blinded by tears.

"Forgive my agitation, Prince; I would return to my own land, even though at the expense of my life. Alas! what is life worth now?"

"Much, friend!" whispered a kind voice at his elbow. "The day will come when your fame shall be as princely as your patron's. Endure and hope!"

It was Sarah Siddons, whose splendid smile lent authority to the prophecy.

"I will serve you in any way," said the Prince, who was saying a few words to the Hon. George Canning, "and if you are serious about returning to France, my friend here will make the necessary arrangements for your safety."

It is little known how the Eastern tastes of the Regent were subsequently influenced by his connection with this man, whose flowery imagination exercised a wonderful charm upon all with whom he came in contact, and upon none more vividly than the royal patron himself, whose after palace arose in a great measure on the idea given by the poet mind; the giant plantain of dingy gold in relief on the scene-painter's sky, with its span of lights falling from the chalice of the lotus, with its intricacy of embellishment and fretwork of decoration; the arabesque of dragons, the grand salon—chief reception-room of the imperial seraglio, the red and gold dream of the pensioned diplomatist of the Pitt administration, the grotesque Chinese-landscaped walls, with their deep rich glow; the gorgeous language of a mysticism more ancient than that of Egypt; the lanterns with their magnificence of colour, and all the trappings and insignia of that dead and buried majesty, at once the bane and charm of Britain.

Here, where upon a couch of Tyrian purple the

demi-god, arrayed in the loose, rich robes of monarchs of the East, held languid court amongst voluptuous paintings upon easels, and statuettes on dusky velvet, and pools of perfume in great golden basins, and burning gums in censers copied from the priceless panes before St. Peter's altar. Flowers of rare hue and warm sensuous colour with delicious odours, gathered of gardens of the sun, delicate-leaved shrubs in great fantastic pots, the glorified arabesques, grotesques, and moreques of Arabian fable, more weird than the hideous procession on the portico of the Vatican, or on these Indian carpets; it, or much of it, came of those fantastic thoughts of him to whom we also owe the Eastern magnificence of *ATALA*.

AUTUMN.

LONDON: the year seventeen hundred and ninety-nine. Drury Lane; the room above the old book-store; Viscount de Chateaubriand writing, pale and ill; Sarah Siddons seated by a little fire, gazing thoughtfully into the flickering light.

"Ah! you are still there, dear lady!" looking up from the writing, and rising slowly.

The Queen of Tragedy came and laid a hand very tenderly upon his shoulder.

"Do you think I could go, and leave you thus? I am an old woman, friend, and you are very young; allow me to remain until you have completed the play, since you are too proud to accept my guineas until you have worked for them. But why so despondent? Young, ardent, talented!"

"And unfortunate!"

"Well, unfortunate if you like. Plume your quill for Drama! Is there no rôle in that fertile and classic répertoire that will grace your friend?"

"No, I have not the heart; I must be content to copy a more favoured, though not more devoted, brother's song."

"No heart? Why, shame, with your fine genius! But I have with me something will put the heart into your whole being! Do you know that brother Charles plays Malcolm yonder this very night? I remember his entrée: he had no heart; would have stayed in Sheffield all his life playing Falconbridge to grimy cutlers. He wrote me on a trifling difficulty of the pocket; I saw Sheridan, who had at one time superstitious regard for our family, thinking a Kemble cannot fail; and he placed him for Malcolm in the Lane cast. John has faith in the new house, as though size coerced success. I like the Garden better, and Kembles yet will reign their little era on its boards! So Charles did venture. I wrote him, 'Nothing venture, nothing win!' remembering my own first night, and on those very boards! And didn't I quake? And in the self-same play, sir; that formidable Macbeth!"

Chateaubriand was leaning his elbow on the table, a plain deal table, ink-stained, strewn with sheets of written paper; he shaded his eyes with his hand, and beneath its slender whiteness they took on that deep spiritual light so far-seeing, so like the vacant prophetic gaze of the visionary.

"I see beyond!" he said, in low, measured tones, "Ere yet a century shall have passed, the poet of the stage, for whom, did he live to-day, I could write my soul out on the drama's page;

with all my love for you and yours, I cannot write for these. He I see is strung like music; your Shakspeare can well wait this divine translation into idealism."

"You are dreaming again!" It seemed so impossible that one should ever come to eclipse John Philip and the House of Kemble.

"Why should I not foresee, dear madam?" Half sadly; then, with dilated nostrils, flashing eyes, and head erect as the charger's hearing afar the pean of victory, he cried, "He will come; and his art will be that sensitive delicacy which is now lacking; his power that finer subtilty to which men are not now attuned; our age is not cultured for such art as his. When England, by progress, is educated to that standard, then, and not till then, will the genius you represent be exalted to its highest! Dared I express one wish bearing upon the future of my work, it is that he would embody an ideal of my life, and create a later fame for *ATALA*!"

"Your book will live to all posterity, do not fear!"

The poet looked shudderingly around his poor abode.

"Exile and outcast!" he murmured. "But one friend in all the world!" with a look of sublime gratitude excelling the sadness.

"You mistake—see here!" and she placed in his hand a small parcel securely sealed, addressed to the "Vicomte de Chateaubriand, kindly favoured by Mrs. Siddons." He looked at the mysterious little package with curiosity.

"You see, you have some other friend somewhere; believe me, and I speak from experience, we never know what friends we really have. And now," putting on a business air, "the parts?"

"I have copied them all; shall I take them to the theatre?"

"Nay, my little lad will carry them. And you will pardon me—I never was a calculator, but I daresay this will cover your charge, sir scribe." Placing a velvet purse bulging with gold in his hand, and then lightly passing her perfumed handkerchief over his lips to smother the thanks.

With the queenliness natural to her the kind-hearted woman withdrew, quietly as she had come. As she passed out, the wizened old book-wife came trotting from the recesses of her den; the presence was phenomenal, and she gazed up at the lady as though she had indeed been one of the Muses, and then innocently invited her to speculate in some coverless old cookery-books. Without hearing the woman or seeing either her or her domain, the actress passed haughtily away to her carriage which was waiting at the theatre.

Chateaubriand peered into the little bag, with its fruit-like bloom and odour of Eastern flowers, and chinked the gold pieces as though they gave forth music heard in long-gone times. Then he proceeded to break the seal of that gift from the unknown, to be unknown no longer; for within a small box of satin-wood, upon a cushion of rose-coloured silk, was a watch of massive gold, bearing this upon a collar circled with diamonds—

Le bon temps viendra.—Eugénie.

The gift and the motto revived him; he felt to be more himself than for many a long day. Thought busied over that good time coming when

his voice would be heard, his name held up to honour, his genius and his art be triumphant.

The old keeper of the book-store entered without ceremony; he scented change of fortune.

"I can pay you now, Israelite!" nothing exulting in the tone, yet it betrayed the long period of goading pain. The old man chuckled, rubbed a sleeve, bobbed and came up again, and then declared money was the furthest from his thoughts.

"Not in any hurry sure; wouldn't have asked your honour for it yesterday, but rents is high about Drury Lane. We've only gentry connected with the honourable profession of literature for our customers, and times is bad, and we let you the best room——"

"An acknowledgment, sir!" said his tenant shortly, but the garrulous tongue ran on all time of the manipulation of the greasy piece of paper.

"I may say it's the drawing-room, since Mister Rich himself once had tea in it, and some of the first of his friends came upstairs that day. I do assure you she as have just gone out ain't the only aristocracy as have honoured my rooms, and it's much I respect 'em, when they pays! I can didly confess I don't think much of them as doesn't. And now—you're not going to leave us, I do hope; such a nice-spoken gentleman as yourself ought not to part company with us!" Anxiously, fumbling at a greasy quill. It was not twenty-four hours ago that this usurer had threatened to sell his bones for the small matter of this same debt, at a time when he had felt even the one friend would never come, when the pleasant life in Suffolk, the dreamy days at the Pavilion, had seemed as distant as the Indian life by old Niagara. He quietly shook his head.

"No! you are not more sordid or more inhuman than others of your class; there is no choice for the victims of misfortune. I will not quit you—yet!"

Leaving a gold piece with the Jew, who was all smiles, as having been paid a great compliment, Chateaubriand strode downstairs and into the street.

There was pleasant sensation of wealth, and he thrust his hands deep within his pockets, walking the pathway where he had so often stood penniless, with a strong desire—a desire which never afterwards left him, and which made him one of the best friends the poor ever had—a desire to help all the indigent that came in his way. There was much in Drury Lane to take the attention at that time of lighting the guttering lamps, and Chateaubriand looked upon the strangely varied scene with more of interest, human and philosophic, than he had ever before bestowed upon it.

Now near to the theatre, and next to a tavern that used, curiously, to be called the Queen's Garter, there flourished a newspaper stall, and hereon might, at all times, be purchased the French as well as English news-sheets; such, that is, as were permitted to be thus sold. Our friend invested—they had up to this time been beyond his slender power of purchase. His hand trembled at again holding a journal of his native land; and in his eagerness he opened it in front of one of the shops where an oil lamp conveniently surmounted a fortification of suet-puddings of the length and colour of rattlesnakes.

Morey! It was like coming back to life! What

changes over there! LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, or *Death!* had scarcely ceased to blaze and smoke with lurid horror. A mushroom court of parvenues at the Tuilleries, and the Corsican Consul, the god of the nation. The few of his order still in Paris clustered in a miserable Faubourg St. Germain society of unrecognized noblesse. What changes!

Denizens of Drury Lane and neighbourhood, and those hurrying through, stared at the absorbed reader, as they brushed past, and put their own offensive construction upon the singularity of a rather wild looking young man standing stock still in a crowded thoroughfare, reading a news-sheet. This was all lost upon him; for once, perhaps for the first happy time, he was indifferent to the rude comment. Away beyond the Channel he was picking up affairs, brain busy, lips compressed, hands clutching the sheet, following the fortunes of the land and the city with all his wanderings dearer than any still. He selected, arranged, organized item after item of news in those brief minutes, with breathless interest and keen exactitude; more intelligence of *La Vendée*, and the Girondists, an authentic portrait of Corday in her days of youth, when the pet of the bourgeoisie, and relics of Madame Roland on sale at a notorious dealer's, who had bought up the guillotine baskets stained by the best blood of France; and the Viscount gave a little shudder, whereat the master of the puddings (who had been watching him from behind the fortifications, and perhaps, imagined the sheet in question had been brought thither for encasing one of these), attributing the shrugging of the shoulders to distaste of his vendibles, came to the doorstep and ordered him off. The young man looked placidly upon the master of the sausages, bowed kindly, and with thanks, and walked quietly on; all was of such slight moment in view of the later knowledge of the paper.

There was a dark arched shed, used for storing coal; an old Frenchwoman sat on a barrow-shaft mending a stocking by lantern-light; he entered. Would she permit him to rest awhile and scan his paper by her light? Certainly, poor soul, and welcome; and while the woman crooned and moaned with her pains, this delicate and trembling stranger sat on a sack in a coalshed, to read by lantern-light of the magnificence, the theatrical magnificence of the Napoleonic régime; of Philip Egalité, who had spoken with him as with a dear friend in the past, now numbered with the martyred; of the glaring creed of the Goddess of Reason; of the fate of Danton and Robespierre; of the death of Louis XVII. in prison; of Bonaparte's campaigns in Italy, and the expedition into Egypt; of David, the Terrorist, he of the accursed genius; half a column of adulatory criticism on his *Oath of the Horatii*; and near by this the column of Literature; and now the stranger starts, jumps from his sack, nearly frightening the old woman to death, seizes hold of the lantern, raising it on a level with the type, and lost to surroundings, reads aloud:—

—ATALA. The magnificent romance by the most promising writer France has ever known, will be read to-night, by command. The excitement caused by this work, his greatest achievement, has had no precedent. Not a copy is to be purchased, the demand altogether exceeding the

power of the *libraire éditeur* to meet. We understand every *fauteuil* for this reading was bespoken by the *Academie*. A large revenu must accrue to the author of this transcendent story; but greater than this is the honour in which the Viscount de Chateaubriand is held by his countrymen, who, for his Indian success, have created a title somewhat exceptional at this period, but which indicates the tolerance in view of this triumph of our first of *littérateurs*: he is known as THE PRINCE OF FABLE.

Extravagantly eulogistic as was the French press of the period under favour of Napoleon, Chateaubriand could yet discount its praise and retain a fair meed of gratification. The words whispered in the Pavilion at Brighton came back to him, and his cheek glowed warm with daring to think of what might be yet in store. By COMMAND! He liked that much. He thought of the Consul very much as he might have done of a successful butcher or baker who has won the grand prize; but he liked the "By Command" for all that, because he was shrewd enough to guess this was merely to gratify the popular voice.

"Here!" gasped the reader, handing the woman her lantern, and thrusting a piece of gold upon her. "My thanks, good mother, most grateful thanks!" And he was turning quickly from the drear cavern, one riddled boot on the unclean bricks of Drury Lane, when face to face, a man barred farther egress; back to the lights, but glimmer of the lantern upon his piercing eyes.

"Monsieur has selected a curious reading-room!" leisurely uttered the intruder, with dry sarcasm.

"I am not aware it is of any consequence to monsieur!" as drily, but with a touch of impatience, piqued, although it was a countryman. "Monsieur will permit me to pass?"

The old woman came hobbling to the entrance, dangling the stocking; events were many in Drury Lane, but not such as brought bits of gold to her coal-shed, and there was something the matter, or that wouldn't have happened. As usual it was a device for which the Evil One had all the credit, and as a natural sequence that was he standing at the opening; and the old lady, who had been expecting the meeting all her life, bridged her spectacles and hobbled up to stare at the visitor. From where she stood in the gloom, perched on a big lump of coal, she could see, although her sight was dim, that the Being was intently studying the other's face, and with depth of purpose beyond that of eccentric intrusiveness; she saw him glance down at the sheet, even to the paragraph still between finger and thumb, and heard the dry comment, "A littérateur, ah! and poor, of course!" And she understood temptation was coming; and that her coal-shed, of all the coal-sheds, was the one to be honoured.

"You are singularly personal, monsieur!" And again Chateaubriand tried to pass the cynical stranger, hastily placing the sheet in his pocket.

"Now what would you give to be the author of ATALA?" said the other cunningly. "There, monsieur, must be the man of the future! He should be in France, the Consul would bestow wealth and honour upon him."

Then the old woman saw this was a decoy from over that hazy depth which was to her as the bottomless pit, the English Channel, where of course this demon would sink the ship. What was her surprise and delight to hear the young man speak out as if—as if—he had been her own boy, as she afterwards deftly turned it in narration.

"It is very possible, monsieur, the author of *Atala* would decline Citizen Bonaparte's patronage!" Saying which he edged away proudly, as though weary of this conference, his curling lip plainly evidencing his opinion of the espionage. That he was recognized he knew full well.

"It is supposed," said the stranger persistently, "that, like many of my illustrious country people, M. Chateaubriand is in London. I have the honour to serve his eminence the Consul in a humble capacity. 'Go, friend,' said his eminence, 'you are acquainted with this M. Chateaubriand's features; seek him, bear to him my esteem, bring him to me, that I may personally honour the author of *Atala*!' Obedience is a trait distinguished in my service. I have been in London three hours and thirty seconds, and I have found M. Chateaubriand, to whom it is my pleasure to deliver M. le Consul's message!"

It is impossible to render the subtle audacity of this address, yet uttered with so insinuating a composure it might well have deceived a less innocent recluse than Chateaubriand, who bowed simply and with grave politeness.

"You do yourself and me great honour. I was unaware I might hope for memory in France, from whence I have been absent so much."

"I have been a student of faces under Convention, Terrorism, Directory, and Consulate, and—I never forget. I am an artist, rather critical than operative; philosopher, active than quiescent; player, in many dramas! Thou art to me *en ancien camarade*, one ever to be remembered. I was inspector at the Martinière the year you were recalled from your lieutenancy in Paris to Brittany. Do you not remember my visit to the College of Dol and—"

"You are M. Joseph Fouché?"

"Not the devil, after all!" murmured the old dame plaintively.

"Not so far off—M. Joseph Fouché at your service. You remember, I always took great interest in your welfare."

"I have heard it said, beware of the interest of M. Joseph."

"Calumny, François. I serve—to serve is to enjoy enemies."

"We need scarcely prolong this interview, M. Fouché."

"You lose sight of my mission. His Eminence the Consul is a great friend to the arts, and especially to literature; you will appreciate my delicacy when I say to literature a trifle complimentary."

Chateaubriand bestowed a look of ineffable disgust upon the diplomatist.

"I think we need not to extend our conversation, M. Fouché. Neither yourself nor the person you elect to serve need trouble about my presence in Paris. If the French nation of itself is approving my poor writings, that is sufficient without any of M. Bonaparte's patronage. Adieu, monsieur."

With quiet dignity, the Viscount, this time

undeterred, continued his way without once looking back, until the old bookstore was reached, when he went on to his room, a nod in passing to the aged couple over their toasted cheese, and almost treading upon the neck of a pioneer of the rats scampering upon the staircase. The pair nodded back, and bobbed and grinned across to one another, cutting a larger piece of cheese on the brown cover of a *Le Désir désiré* of Nicholas Flamel.

Going to the rough leather desk, his sole movable possession, Chateaubriand unlocked the case and took from one of the pockets a small miniature, an exquisite rendering in oils of Miss Ives, his sometime pupil; he gazed upon this with adoration, the true adoration of the poet-lover.

"Yes," he murmured, "in thee, in thee alone, has *Atala* breathed! *Thy* praise, and I am happy. As thou once praised it, looking from out those eyes such love as *Atala* knew, breathing upon those lips my name. Shall we e'er meet again? When next will René hear the pleading voice of *Atala*?"

(To be concluded.)

POETIC GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

BY WILLIAM ANDREWS, F.R.H.S.

LITERARY by-paths furnish some singular specimens of poetical graces. We have collected a number, and reproduce a few for the entertainment of our readers.

Robert Fergusson, the Edinburgh poet, was born in 1751, and was a student at the St. Andrew's University from his 13th to 17th year. It was the duty of each student, in turn, to ask a blessing at the dinner table. One day, to the consternation of all, the youthful bard repeated the following lines:

"For rabbits young, and for rabbits old,
For rabbits hot, and for rabbits cold,
For rabbits tender, and for rabbits tough,
Our thanks we render, for we've had enough."

The masters of the college deliberated how they should punish the graceless poet. It was finally resolved not to censure him, but to have in the future a more spare supply of rabbits. Poor Fergusson's sad career closed in a lunatic asylum at an early age, not, however, before he had enriched Scottish poetical literature with some important contributions.

Burns appears to have had a great admiration for this wayward son of song. He placed over his remains in the Canongate Churchyard, Edinburgh, a tombstone bearing the following inscription:

"Here lies Robert Fergusson,
Poet, born September 5th, 1751,
Died October 16th, 1774.
No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
No storied urn, nor animated bust;
This simple stone directs Pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er her Poet's dust."

On the back of the stone it is stated:

"By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial place is

ever to remain sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson."

More than one poetical grace is attributed to the facile pen of Burns. His grace before dinner is well known, and is as follows:—

"Oh Thou who kindly dost provide
For every creature's want!
We bless Thee, God of nature wide,
For all Thy goodness lent:
And if it please Thee, Heavenly guide,
May never worse be sent,
But whether granted or denied
Lord bless us with content."

It is said, that at one of Burns's convivial dinners he was desired to say grace, and he gave the following, impromptu:—

"O Lord we do Thee humbly thank
For what we little merit:
Now Jean may tak' the flesh away,
And Will bring on the spirit."

On one occasion a rhymester, who had placed before him a supper small in quantity and poor in quality, invoked a blessing with the following lines:—

"O Thou who bless'd the loaves and fishes;
Look down upon these two poor dishes;
And though the 'tatoes be but small,
Lord make them large enough for all;
For if they do our bellies fill,
'Twill be a wondrous miracle."

This reminds us of an epigram entitled "Dress v. Dinner":—

What is the reason, can you guess,
When men are poor, and women thinner,
So much do they for dinner dress,
There's nothing left to dress for dinner.

On a graceless peer an epigrammatist wrote:—

"By proxy I pray, and by proxy I vote,
A graceless peer said to a churchman of note;
Who answered, my lord, then I venture to say,
You'll to Heaven ascend in a similar way."

Here is a grateful grace:—

"Some have meat, and cannot eat,
And some would eat that want it;
But we have meat, and we can eat,
And so the Lord be thankit."

The Rev. Samuel Wesley, formerly vicar of Epworth, and another friend were entertained to dinner at Temple Belwood, by a host noted as a strange compound of avarice and oddity. Mr. Wesley returned thanks with the following impromptu lines:—

"Thanks for the feast, for 'tis no less
Than eating manna in the wilderness;
Here meagre famine bears controllless sway,
And ever drives each fainting wretch away.
Yet here, O how beyond a saint's belief,
We've seen the glories of a chine of beef;
Here chimneys smoke, which never smoked before,
And we have dined, where we shall dine no more."

In conclusion we give a vegetarian grace. The first four lines are to be said before the meal:—

"These fruits do Thou, O Father, bless,
Which Mother Earth to us doth give;
No blood doth stain our feast to-day,
In Thee we trust, and peaceful live."

The next is a form of thanksgiving after a vegetarian meal:—

"We thank Thee, Lord, for these Thy fruits,
Which Mother Earth to us doth give
No blood hath stained our feast to-day,
In Thee we trust, and peaceful live!"

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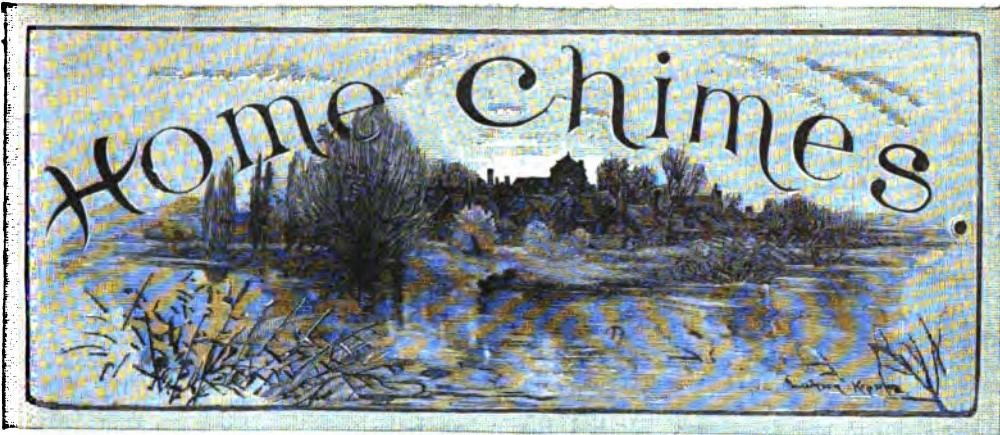
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LONDON : NOVEMBER 28, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

MOSES YOUNGASHE.

A SKETCH IN NEUTRAL TINT.

BY RANDOLPH FORTESCUE.

CHAPTER I.

A LIGHT breeze stirred the branches of the old Jenneting apple, sending down a little shower of delicate pink and white shell-like petals upon the hair and dresses of the two girls seated beneath the tree; the elder of the two shook the blossoms impatiently from her dress saying.

"I hate things falling on me, it feels like earwigs." Then gazing up in the branches with a portentous yawn, she added, "I wish the apples were ripe, I'm so tired of these blossoms."

"Yet they are very pretty," returned Mabel, meditatively regarding a fallen petal which lay in her own pink palm.

"So insipid, just enough colour about them to make one wish for more."

"It seems to me, Ethel, you are always wanting the things you cannot have, if the apples were ripe now, you wouldn't be satisfied, you would wish they were grapes."

"No, I shouldn't. I detest grapes, and pines, and peaches; they remind me of those shoddy people, the Websters, and of Drayton Court. I can't endure to think of that place—and all the money wasted there—keeping it in readiness for an ignorant young savage from Colorado, who may never condescend to come over and take possession—too stupid to know its value."

"You don't know that he is ignorant—or a savage, if he has been brought up in America," said the younger girl naïvely; "besides, if Mr. Youngashe were dead, or if he had never been born, it could make no difference to us; Drayton Court is not ours."

"No difference!" repeated Ethel Comyn, with a touch of scorn in her slow dull tones.

"Does it make no difference to us what kind of man it is who inherits the only decent place in the neighbourhood? If your brains were above the level of a kitten's, Mabel, you'd see that—and something more."

"I may not be very clever" admitted the junior—her cold, pleasant manner just a shade ruffled, "but I can understand that you are most miserably and eternally discontented. Father was saying last night, he is really distressed about you, he wishes you were brighter, more satisfied with your lot."

"Does he? I am not surprised, from my father's point of view we have no earthly wish ungratified; having no desires himself beyond the routine of his office, taking three services on Sundays, and consoling all the horrid old women in the parish, he thinks we also ought to be content. So long as he has sixpence to give away, and a clean surplice for Sunday, I believe he has attained the extreme limit of his ambition. I tell you, Mabel, our father has preached patience and contentment for so long—to himself, his parishioners and his children—that he has persuaded himself it's really sinful to lead any other than this vegetative existence—which is impossible to thinking men and women."

Mabel looked at her sister in silence for a minute, as though she neither comprehended her complaint, nor saw any cause for this.

"Fine dissatisfaction that at no time went away, But mingled with her laughter, even at its lightest play."

Then she rejoined quietly—

"I think you are very wrong and utterly unjust, my father does his duty. We cannot say that of many people."

Ethel vouchsafed no reply, but rose and sauntered drearily away, and the little orchard seemed to lack a "gracious somewhat" in its aspect when she left it, though she could scarcely be accused of taking the sunshine with her, for there was nothing "sunny" in Ethel's youth and beauty. The day was as bright as before, and the

tribe of twittering birds in the orchard boughs, who were making matrimonial engagements for the season, or feeding their young, and discussing the prospects of the summer amongst themselves, chirped and caroled as gaily as ever—heeding neither the disdainful beauty nor the demure younger sister who remained beneath the tree alone.

An English orchard in the month of May is usually admitted to be a pretty sight, and the picture is enhanced in value when the foreground acquires life and interest by the introduction of two girls, both young and charming in their different styles.

This particular portion of the vicar's glebe would doubtless have looked well enough in a picture, but out of one, it was confessedly a little cheerless and depressing. It had the broken down aspect of almost everything that belonged to the Vicar of Dalecot; the scanty patches of ragged unkempt grass beneath the old trees, relieved by wide interspaces of brown earth—scratched bare by an industrious tribe of long-legged chickens in a condition of perpetual moult—scarcely offered an inspiriting prospect to the aesthetic spectator, and there was more than a *soupon* of rusty tins and broken pottery in the nettle clumps which flourished with such rank, repulsive luxuriance in the far corners of the orchard. Then the hedge surrounding this clerical domain was as ragged as the grass, and so ill-kept that it opposed but a feeble obstruction to the depredations of small boys who desired to cultivate an acquaintance with the vicar's apples.

It was supper time for the long-legged chickens, and Ethel paused by the orchard gate to watch good little Mabel, with her eternal air of duty, feeding the ungainly brood. The sordid accessories of the scene only served to accentuate more sharply the almost imperial beauty of the elder girl by the gate, and the keen cold sunlight of the May time, brought out the rounded contours and the clear outlines of the thoroughbred little head in strong relief against the deliciously harmonious background of tender greens.

"White with flowery frosts of May."

Miss Comyn's faded, threadbare velveteen gown did not stand the test of bright sunlight quite so triumphantly as the cool low-toned carnations of her flesh, and she glanced down contemptuously on the russet folds, unconscious that they possessed a high artistic value, which would have been wholly wanting in a newer dress.

Nothing in the aspect of these too familiar scenes afforded the smallest indication that Ethel was going forward, shabby velveteen and all, to meet her "fate!" Such scant sympathy has Nature with the tremendous events of our big-little lives, that positively no revelation was vouchsafed her, no hint that this dull day would not end precisely as a hundred others had done before. It was only when she came within earshot of the drawing-room windows that her steps were arrested by stray waifs of speech in unfamiliar accents, and then she went in conscious of a little flutter of pleasurable excitement. The long-expected owner of Drayton had come at last—

without any flourish of trumpets to herald his advent! The "Coloradorowdy" had, so far, scarcely made good use of his opportunities it seemed.

The visitor, who rose from a low chair beside Mrs. Comyn at Ethel's entrance, had no trace of *gaucherie* in his manner, still less was he the rough product of the far West of Ethel's predictions and Mrs. Comyn's fears. The difference between the agreeable reality now presented to them and their ideal American, was almost ludicrous. Yet, to the perceptions of Dalecot Parsonage, his manner was distinctly odd and unusual, though it would be scarcely correct to describe him as un-English; the type of face, too, was familiar Saxon, and pleasant withal to look upon.

"Well, she beats all America hollow," was his mental comment upon the introduction, as he released the cool, limp hand she tendered him, and returned to his seat by Mrs. Comyn, though both eyes and thoughts wandered perpetually to the vicar's elder daughter. To Mr. Youngashe there was something both piquant and provoking in her very indifference and dulness; he felt he would positively like to see her made furiously angry for once—if that were possible—and he shrewdly suspected it was; or he could even endure to behold her in a passion of grief and tears, if he might be the comforter. It was undoubtedly Ethel's first conquest, and yet she had done—nothing! As Mabel would say, nothing but drop wearily into another little chair just opposite the guest, and murmur some few words in so low a tone that he had to listen attentively to catch the faint, precious utterances of the oracle. Nevertheless, those few words were well-chosen and graceful. And when she relapsed into silence, suppressing a slight tendency to yawn, Youngashe exerted himself to interest and amuse her, as he would not have dreamed of doing for the benefit of the worthy vicarress. He was rewarded in due course by seeing a gleam of light come into the dull, beautiful grey eyes, and the ghost of a smile hovering on the perfect lips, as he gave her a racy description of his summer on a cattle ranch at San Juan.

"I verily believe she has never seen anything of the world, or had the least amusement in her life," he said to himself, with a shrewd guess at the truth, and a tinge of pity warmed his honest young heart towards this girl, who had no experience of existence outside the stagnant world of Dalecot.

It is better, according to the old adage, to be born lucky than rich, and Moses Youngashe seemed no exception to the general rule. At six-and-twenty he had already achieved a great success in the eyes of society. If he had no near relatives living, he owned a host of friends, and was blest besides with youth and health. A pleasant future, cloudless and free of care, lay before him, and he was also the possessor of an ample fortune before Drayton Court became his, by the will of its late eccentric owner, his great-uncle; thus all these happy circumstances combined to make Moses Youngashe, despite his rather absurd patronymic, a very desirable *parti* in the eyes of the matchmaking mothers and ambitious damsels of Daleshire.

"The estate seems to have been kept in wonderful order," he was saying to the vicar, "and it's a fine old place. We have nothing like it in

America." (He had come to the same conclusion about another product of Daleshire, in his own mind). "There are some alterations I should like to make here and there, but I shall do nothing without taking Brandon's opinion. He has travelled all over Europe, and is up to everything. I rely so much on his taste and judgment."

Frequent allusions to this mysterious "Brandon," who it appeared was expected at Drayton Court that evening—cropped out in all his careless talk, as if Brandon's name were, in a manner, the silver thread whereon his pearls of speech were strung; and Ethel was already, in her disdainful soul, setting the heir down as a mentally feeble youth who clung to the unknown Brandon as a species of mental and moral prop—"The glass of fashion and the mould of form" whereby he regulated his own conduct.

"Of course this Brandon is some clever American adventurer who has fastened upon Mr. Youngashe, made himself indispensable, and will stick to him as long as he lives or has any money. The kind of man who will advise him equally well about the purchase of a wife or the selection of his clothes," said scornful Ethel when the new owner of Drayton was being discussed in full family conclave that evening.

"My dear Ethel, what shocking notions you have! I can't imagine where you can get such ideas. 'The purchase of a wife,' these expressions are very unladylike" said Mrs. Comyn reprovingly.

"It sounds un-Christian, and is very bad taste besides," remarked the vicar placidly. Mabel's innocent prattle never drew down the rebukes of her elders, but then it might be safely affirmed that Mabel Comyn had no "ideas"—or if she had, they were so skilfully concealed, the most maliciously disposed person would not have thought of bringing the accusation against her.

Much about the time that the Comyns were sitting in judgment on the American, the latter was regaling a friend, "over the walnuts and the wine," with his first impressions of Drayton and its surroundings. This friend—styled "the adventurer" by the fair Ethel, but known to his fellow-men as Louis Brandon—was scarcely so popular with the majority as a successful adventurer would desire to be. He was a reserved, silent, indolent man; in his way, as impassive and inanimate as Ethel Comyn was in hers; but the indifference of the girl and the man arose from totally different causes. Ethel had seen too little of the world—in fact, had so far met with nothing worthy of her magnificent regard; whilst Brandon had seen too much, he was "up to every move on the board," as Youngashe observed, and was proportionately weary of them all.

He almost needed a piquant dash of failure to surprise him into enjoying that monotony of success which had been his from very early days. It had been a wild life at first, with incident and variety enough to flavour the lives of a dozen men crowded into half as many years. The odd part of the business was that Louis Brandon had never courted success, he had merely taken what fell in his way with lazy quiescence. He had started a cattle ranch in San Juan, in partnership with Youngashe, simply in search of a new sensation, and that also had prospered in the hands of the lucky owners, almost beyond belief. The wild life

and the solitude had suited Brandon's odd humour to perfection for a time; but now he hailed the happy accident which made Youngashe heir to broad acres in the old country with genuine relief. He could initiate his friend into European and, above all, English life and manners; to him it was all a well-thumbed primer—to Youngashe the old world was still a *terra incognita* to which he looked forward with gleeful anticipation.

The extraordinary mental differences which existed between this pair of friends, rather increased than lessened the very sincere regard they entertained for each other; and Brandon, by virtue of his ten years of actual seniority, and also of his being in thought and experience some fifty years the elder of this modern Moses, was at once the "mentor, guide, and familiar friend"—much as Ethel had surmised, though under vastly different circumstances.

"They are such nice people at the vicarage—quite kind and friendly; and there's just one girl there, Brandon—a most magnificent beauty, you'll be simply astounded when you see her."

"My dear fellow, don't you know I'm never astonished at anything? I am, notwithstanding, extremely glad to learn that the village—or vicarage, did you say?—contains but one girl: a circumstance almost unique in the history of villages, it imparts a new charm to Drayton and its surroundings. I purpose to investigate the case of the Dalecot girl, and ascertain if her existence is owing to natural or sexual selection."

"What an absurd old boy you are! I didn't mean quite what I said."

"Few people do," murmured Brandon placidly.

"Only this splendid girl, the elder daughter, outshines the whole tribe, so that you don't think of the others when she is present."

"Love at first sight. Oh, too impressionable Moses!" said the other, yawning; "my soul greatly misgives me that I ever let you out of my sight. I perceive you have, even in this Arcadia, already contrived to get into mischief. What in the name of fate, may I ask, were you doing down at the vicarage? Surely you didn't find yourself involved in spiritual difficulties, and forced to apply to the vicar for ghostly counsel?"

"Don't be absurd, Brandon," entreated his friend. "I went because I was dull, don't you see? I'd looked over the place, seen the steward, who said if I wanted to know anything about my great-uncle, the vicar was the man to supply the information, as of late years he was the only visitor ever permitted to enter the doors of Drayton Court. After three days of this kind of thing, I began to feel lonely—the grandeur of Drayton, I suspect—so I went out to look for a little human society. That great-uncle of mine must have been a queer old fellow, I think."

"Without doubt," said Brandon dryly. "He evinced his eccentricity in the disposition of his property." And then, apostrophizing a peeled walnut, he added, "Dull! was he—poor child? Ye gods! am I ever anything else? But I don't fly to country vicarages for consolation; on the contrary, they are about the last places in the world in which I should expect to be able to dispel ennui. Can I never invest you with even the rags of a decent conventionality, my modern Moses? You should have waited for the Dalecot

folk to come and adore you—as Lord of Drayton and master of a 'big pile.' The mountain should not have gone to them. A pauper couldn't have been received with less enthusiasm on his return to the home of his ancestors," said Brandon, smiling.

"I wish you wouldn't call me Moses, anyway," returned Youngashe, with a shade of irritation in his manner. "It's unfortunate enough to have a fool of a name like that, but coupled with my curious patronymic it becomes infinitely absurd, suggesting a certain greenness and incompetency that I feel would somehow prejudice strangers against me. I always imagine women will laugh at it—and me."

"Now, how can any sane man object to the name?" answered Brandon, with a provoking drawl. "It is of great historic interest, and, as far as I can see, individuals blest with that name have always been well received by the softer sex."

The owner of Drayton laughed in spite of himself. "Well, I shall feel awkward if I ever have to ask a woman to share such an imbecile cognomen, and I shall implore her not to call me 'Moses,' at least, but you—you are incorrigible."

"Never mind me, pray return to the more interesting subject of the village and the one girl who adorns it with her gracious presence. Are all the miserable males hereabouts at daggers drawn concerning her? and shall we also have to join the mighty army of adorers?"

"You shall see for yourself, I won't pretend to describe her, I never can classify and catalogue women; but the thing which most struck me—"

"All of a heap," interposed Brandon.

"After her beauty, was a curious sort of resemblance to you."

"My dear Mo—Youngashe, I mean—pray pardon these interruptions, but your narrative almost excites me; I had a hazy consciousness of my own charms before, and now your naïve statement only confirms my worst suspicions." And he rose languidly from his chair and contemplated his reflection in a neighbouring mirror with melancholy interest. "It is too true," he murmured. "Irresistible is the one word that adequately describes us both."

"You abject old duffer," returned his friend, still laughing. "I did not say she resembled you personally, it was a curious likeness in manner and style which struck me—an impassiveness almost provoking in a girl who can never have seen the world. She will no more betray wonder, interest, or emotion of any kind, than a red Indian will. Nothing seems worth that girl's notice, yet there's no lack of intellect or power beneath her dull, disdainful exterior. She seems to want waking up; show her something worth caring for, and this new Galatea will also receive life. She has a 'magnificent pallor' that reminds you of a statue," added Youngashe.

"A very searching and critical analysis, which betrays the analyst," returned Brandon; and he murmured, "beware of a pale woman whose general health is good." Then, as if exhausted by his conversational efforts, he relapsed into his normal condition of dull indifference and became, like the poet's "Lady Lilith," "subtly of himself contemplative," as he sat gazing abstractedly at his rings and slowly drinking his wine, while the gentle current of his friend's small talk rippled

on and on. His boyish enthusiasm and pleasant freshness contrasting curiously with Brandon's dull mood. A dulness that, as Youngashe had acutely observed of Ethel Comyn, was not the result of stupidity, but merely because he had so seldom found anything worthy of his attentions. He had lived so much in the past, that the future, he thought, could hardly hold a fresh sensation for him.

CHAPTER II.

FROM the first, the new occupants of Drayton Court had foregathered with the vicarage folk. The "county," it was true, had received the heir with open arms, and he had been feted and courted not a little; unfortunately, like Gallio, he "cared for none of these things." The cheerful pomposity of the county magnates bored him, and he was ill at ease and unhappy in the society of their magnificently gracious womankind. Dinners and dances were alike an infliction to the Anglo-American; it was "society" as he had viewed it in the best circles in New York—with subtle differences that made it indeed a new world to Youngashe. Brandon had seen it all aforetime, and went the round of the dismal dissipation that Daleshire society afforded them with his usual dull demeanour of placid boredom.

In the homely precincts of the vicarage there was little or no conventionality, the "*reæ angusta domi*" had done away with society and its many formulas long ago. Even the awe-inspiring fact that only ten lives stood between the amiable humdrum vicar and an earldom was practically ignored in the struggles and difficulties of genteel poverty at Dalecot. Yet life at the vicarage, despite the difficulties and the slipshod poverty, was in some sort a pleasant idyl, after all, if Ethel Comyn had been minded to regard it as such; and the manifold attractions thereof were speedily recognized by the Americans, who knew no more agreeable way of lounging through the summer afternoons than by strolling down to vicarage after luncheon, most days, and playing tennis with Ethel and Mabel Comyn, or in exploring the woods and lanes under their guidance.

Youngashe began to think England the most fascinating place in creation, and to believe that Drayton (or Dalecot) was the very "*coronat opus*" of the whole county wherein nature had surpassed herself. He accepted the opinions and advice of the ladies at the vicarage with deferential humility, and was heartily grateful for the interest they were pleased to display in his affairs; sublimely unconscious meanwhile of the scorn with which the Daleshire magnates surveyed their blameless proceedings, and pitied these guileless American innocents lavishly, while they condemned the Comyn tribe with unsparing ferocity.

Mabel Comyn and Youngashe seemed so naturally fitted for each other, that it was quite inevitable they should "pair" at tennis, or be left behind by the other two in their walks; but the probable and natural in real life is too generally overruled by the abnormal and improbable, thwarted by that intractable element in human nature which delights in flying directly in the

face of providence on all possible occasions. Hence the two men obedient to the eternal laws of attraction and repulsion, became the satellites of that bright particular star Ethel Comyn, while she, beginning to feel her power, rose to the occasion, and treated her willing victims with equal justice or injustice, according to the variable mood. Brandon accepted her caprices with the amused indifference of a philosopher, but the more impulsive Youngashe, alternately flattered, hurt, and puzzled, was fain to turn to Mabel for sympathy and consolation, who, on those occasions, made the most of her little hour of triumph, and angled not unskilfully for the prize on which she had set her small affections. Youngashe's happy nature, his hearty appreciation of small joys, and his general frankness and simplicity, accorded well with the contented placid disposition of that demure little slyboots Mabel Comyn. "He was not too clever," as she naïvely reflected, and in all other respects was simple perfection. Six feet of good looks combined with so many acres of worldly possessions, might have satisfied a much more exacting girl than the vicar's younger daughter.

Ethel, on the other hand, regarded these small arrangements, which jumped so perfectly with Mabel's secret desires and innocent ambitions, with perfect quiescence—an indifference born of her intense egotism. She never betrayed more than a shadowy and evanescent interest in the owner of Drayton; but in the "adventurer" she had met her match. His secretiveness, the difficulty with which one ascertained anything about the *ego*, the real nature of the man, hidden beneath the lazy external dulness, was a positive attraction to Ethel's peculiar temperament. To her he was in every way a thousand times the superior of Youngashe—who was personally less than nothing to the ambitious Ethel; she saw in him merely a means towards her end, and that end the acquisition of wealth and power. She only wanted a chance—and hitherto poverty had proved a fatal barrier; hence wealth seemed the chief good in life to the penniless beauty, who meant to win the one desirable thing she lacked by a bold *coup de main*.

Now Drayton Court was a very tangible bird in the hand, whereas the possible wealth and possessions of Brandon, in some distant Eldorado, were but shadowy and unsubstantial myths in a still more problematical bush, and it was so difficult to obtain any just idea of Brandon's real position, though she felt that a "position" in American society was not to be compared with that of the mistress of Drayton amongst her own people, where her father's precise relationship to the Earl of Withernesea would not be overlooked or forgotten.

Ethel Comyn never guessed that Brandon, could "pile up dollars" against the owner of Drayton Court any day; if that one point could have been settled beyond a doubt, she would have instantly set herself with all the force of her nature to the subjugation of this provokingly indolent and mysterious male, who had suddenly fallen in her way from that unknown world across the herring-pond. If she could ever love a man, it would be Brandon, she told herself; and if a man were ever worthy of her fierce hatred, it would be Brandon also. A subtle sense of affinity

had awakened in her apology for a soul, and this new study became more engrossing every day as she made, or fancied she made, fresh additions to her knowledge of the "subject." In point of skill at the game she played, Ethel Comyn was no match for her antagonist; and to say that he found a dull amusement in observing this strange product of an English village, would describe his mental attitude neither correctly nor adequately. She was very beautiful, and even fascinating in her utter unlikeness to other women, also in the vague possibilities in the way of future development which the attentive student discerned in her, and did himself finally develop under the new subtle influences he brought to bear upon her. Brandon was now fairly roused out of his apathy; it seemed to him almost possible this girl might fill a certain empty shrine—whose very existence was undreamed of by those who thought they knew him best—a vacant place, made years ago by loss and failure, and hidden away in a past so remote that even Youngashe was not cognizant of it, which had not merely kept him single until he was long past thirty, but had helped, in a certain sense, to age him, and to make his self-contemplative nature shrink from the possibility of the renewal of feelings which belonged to what he termed "a previous state of existence." The time for passionate emotion, deep suffering, and keen delight had long gone by for Louis Brandon, he believed, and he was well-content to let it go; developing, instead, to their uttermost the transient minor enjoyments of the moment in his epicurean fashion; and now the question he continually asked himself with regard to Ethel Comyn was this—Was there enough in her—beside the very patent fact of her singular beauty—to compensate a man now free for the loss of that freedom? Could he dare to make the beauty his own for the passing gratification of a purely sensuous desire, to wake and find it dragging him down, if not to a hell of despair, at least to a purgatory of minor miseries which never even rippled the placid surface of his present life.

If he could once assure himself that a soul existed, and was only lying dormant beneath the sentient marble of this chill beauty, he would risk all the rest, and make the grand experiment for weal or woe. Hitherto Brandon had been baffled in all his investigations, the keenest analysis of Ethel's character neither served to reassure him nor to answer satisfactorily the questions that tormented him; perchance because he was all unconsciously drifting by an easy natural transition from admiration and interest into a warmer feeling perilously resembling love.

"We are so intensely interested in all you tell us of American life, Mr. Youngashe, and enjoy your descriptions so much, that I hope you don't think us troublesome in always wanting to learn more?" said gentle, garrulous Mrs. Comyn, who was sitting in a condition of enviable contentment, one hot summer afternoon, beneath some ancestral trees on the lawn at Drayton Court. The world just then was wearing a gala aspect for the harassed, much-worried wife of the Vicar of Dalecot. She was an honoured guest at one of the finest houses in the county, and the owner thereof paid her as much deferential attention as if she had been a duchess, or the wife of the Earl of

Withernsea, instead of the fourth cousin of that potentate.

Mrs. Comyn had been plying Youngashe with a series of artless questions in the most approved feminine style, concerning himself and Brandon, the drift of which he hardly saw at first, although it dawned upon him by degrees, and he then understood that amiable Mrs. Comyn was really dying to know, in plain terms, "What Brandon was when he was at home?"—a delightfully frank question, possible amongst schoolboys, but quite inadmissible in good society.

Youngashe was scarcely so green as his interlocutor imagined, and, if his suspicions were once aroused, little could be gained by cross-questioning, however skilfully conducted. Mrs. Comyn continued her innocent prattle, quite unconscious of the effect she was producing; and good little Mabel, who was sheltering herself beneath the maternal wing, sat with her big blue eyes raised admiringly to the owner of Drayton, while she received his good-natured commonplaces as though they had been the words of an oracle.

"I cannot imagine how all your numerous American possessions get on without you," pursued Mrs. Comyn, smiling sweetly. "Do you leave a steward in charge? or how do you manage now Mr. Brandon is with you, when of course he cannot attend to the cattle ranch and—and all the other things you have told us of; but I can perfectly understand how useful and nice he must be at Drayton, and feel sure you don't want to part with him; it would be difficult to fill his place—Mr. Brandon is so *very* gentlemanly, I think."

Youngashe raised his brows in some amazement as this novel idea of Brandon was presented to him. Manager of the ranch in San Juan—useful friend and private secretary in England! The notion was too comic, and Youngashe was almost on the point of rushing bluntly into explanations, when his inborn American caution made him stop short, and he only replied dryly,—

"Yes, as you remark, Brandon is so useful I should be uncommonly sorry to part with the dear old man, so I keep a stockman to look after the ranch; and I haven't any other 'landed property' out West," and a grim little smile quivered under his moustache as he perceived that poor Mrs. Comyn's face fell perceptibly, and she looked uneasily across the lawn to where the magnificent Ethel was sitting apart with Brandon.

Whilst Youngashe noted the anxious mother's change of attitude, and chuckled a little to himself to think how neatly he had checkmated her, he never imagined that Mrs. Comyn was acting strictly under Ethel's orders in making her too transparently artful investigations. The astute Ethel was not minded to take a single step in the dark, and would commit herself to no well-defined attitude with regard to either of the men until she saw her way clearly. In the meantime she admitted neither mother nor sister into her confidence, though she used them freely as cat's-paws.

"The maternal Comyn is taking an interest in you, Brandon," observed Youngashe, as they stood together on the terrace watching one of the Drayton Court carriages bowling down the avenue with their late guests.

"Ah!" said Brandon slowly, "the woman who

failed to be interested in me would indeed be a unique specimen of her sex. I have even developed a feeble kind of interest in myself occasionally."

"Don't flatter yourself, old man; I mean she's anxious most evidently about your real position. She'd like to know whether you had 'struck it,' as they say down West, and exactly what you are doing here; that is, whether you are not my secretary, sort of humble companion, and so forth. I enjoyed her guileless queries immensely."

"I hope you thoroughly enlightened her," was the dry response.

Youngashe glanced at him quickly, but Brandon was looking straight ahead at nothing with his usual air of placid boredom, and declined to evince the mildest interest in the conversation, though he could hardly fail to perceive that Youngashe was burning to unburden himself of his impressions, and to discuss Mrs. Comyn at length; but Brandon was in his most uncommunicative mood, and couldn't be lunged into conversation. Ethel had gone away leaving a pleasanter impression than usual behind her. Brandon had seen her at her best, and had, moreover, enjoyed her society quite undisturbed for the greater part of the afternoon, and he wanted to be left alone with his unwontedly agreeable sensations.

"I was almost blurting out the truth," said his friend rather uneasily.

"And why didn't you, my dear fellow? Never spoil an 'almost'—besides, the truth is always edifying, if not always agreeable."

"Well, I thought Mrs. Comyn was coming the 'old campaigner' over us, and I didn't quite see the force of it, neither did I want to spoil sport," returned Youngashe, reddening a little.

Brandon threw away the end of his cigarette, lighted a fresh one, looked oracular, and merely answered, "Precisely."

A light was dawning upon him, which rudely dispelled the charming sensations and impressions of the past two hours, for he divined what master-spirit had prompted those artless leading questions; but still he obstinately refused to betray the ghost of an interest in his friend's revelations, though he was slowly making up his mind to decisive action; and there was really no need to question Youngashe, he would inevitably recount all that had occurred if he were only let alone.

"I thought I had no right to speak of anything concerning your private affairs in your absence, and I only want to explain what has occurred with regard to Mrs. Comyn in order that I may know how to act for the future. You are such a mysterious sort of fellow, Brandon, one never quite knows what it is you really want."

"Dear boy," said Brandon, slowly emerging from the depths of a profound reverie, "I never quite know myself, or if I really want anything; but you always do what is right. Tell the scheming matron what you please—that I am a waiter in a New York hotel, or an assistant in a dry-goods store when I'm at home, or one of the silver king's partners, if you like it better—it cannot make the shadow of a shade of difference to me; especially as I think of going back in the autumn, now I've seen you fairly started as a British landed proprietor."

"Going back! And without me?" echoed Youngashe in some dismay.

"Going back, and without you," returned

Brandon. "You have begun life afresh in a new character. You own a charming property, the very beau-ideal of an English home, and it's quite time you learnt the 'obligations of your nobility.' Your place is here, my Moses; for Drayton Court is in some sort your 'old man of the sea,' a tie and a responsibility for you. For me—I have no ties, no obligations, and so can come and go unquestioned."

"I hoped we should settle down together here for a bit," began Moses, ruefully.

"We, my innocent child! You will settle down undoubtedly; but the fate of the Wandering Jew is mine also; there's no abiding place for me; and one of my reasons for leaving you so soon is that I desire to carry away a delightful impression of a charming place quite untarnished. I have not once been bored here, and I should like to be able to go away cherishing even some little tender regrets; looking back along the vistas of time to Drayton Court as an oasis in the arid, limitless wastes of boredom."

"You are a queer fellow; I shall never quite understand you," answered Youngashe, laughing.

"Probably because there's nothing to understand."

"But you'll come back?"

"The wise man makes no promises, knowing himself to be the sport of the gods, so I answer conditionally—I will come back, if I can; if not, we shall meet somewhere in this little world; meantime I shall cherish the ideal Moses—as you, the Brandon of your guileless fancy."

Brandon made no further allusion to his proposed departure during the next week or two; but Youngashe knew him at least well enough to feel assured his decision was final, and that no entreaties would avail to keep him at Drayton, if he once grew weary or determined to go.

CHAPTER III.

SINCE the episode of their visit to Drayton Court, a faint subtle difference was perceptible in Ethel's demeanour, a change so slight that it would probably have escaped the notice of an observer less keenly interested than Brandon; nevertheless, the change was very real; it seemed to him as though some mental conflict was sustained in a dual nature, and the looker-on predicted that ambition would have an easy victory over love and inclination. To Youngashe she appeared even gayer and less reserved with Brandon than formerly; but she was, in truth, sweeping every obstruction out of her path with an unsparing hand. She was kinder to Brandon, with a cold kindness which told its own story. Ethel's powerful nature could rise above prejudice and inclination, and if the struggle was severe, it was brief, and her action decided. In his way Brandon was quite as decided, but he waited and made no sign.

Ethel Comyn was alone in the vicarage drawing-room one glowing August afternoon, no visitors were expected from Drayton that day, and Mrs. Comyn was out in the village with Mabel. The hot, slumberous air, full of the scent of fresh flowers and new-mown hay, together with the peace and sleepy silence of the place, were all conducive

to the indolent contentment and pleasant self-satisfaction which animated Ethel Comyn as she reviewed the "situation" with an impartial mind, and gave her casting vote in favour of Youngashe, while she sat at the piano, lazily trying over odds and ends of some of Brandon's favourite songs. A voice, outside the open window, said,—

"May I come in?"

Ethel turned half-round on the music stool, and a little flush of gladness came into her face—in spite of her resolutions, at the sound of that voice."

"Of course you may—unless you prefer the garden."

The guest stepped in through the open French window at Ethel's invitation, and came towards her, his normal indifference perhaps a shade more pronounced than usual, as he took a low seat near the piano, and looked keenly at Ethel from under his drooping lids.

"Are you alone to day—what has become of Mr. Youngashe?" she asked.

"It's a distressing circumstance, Miss Comyn, but I am quite alone, my Damon is busy with his steward this afternoon; you would perhaps wonder, if it were not too hot to wonder at anything, why I couldn't defer my visit until another day when the youth in question could accompany me."

"No" said Ethel with a little curl of her lip, "I didn't wonder at all, only it is so unusual to see either of you alone."

"In the normal condition of things you would not have seen me to-day" he returned slowly; "my explanation and apology are contained in the same words: I am going away, and came merely to say good-bye to Dalecot."

"Does that mean you are going back to America?" asked Ethel as her cheek flushed a little and she breathed more quickly; the unexpected news smote her with a sharp sudden pang, yet at the same minute she saw herself delivered from a certain difficulty thereby.

"Yes, I return almost immediately, in fact I leave Drayton to-morrow," he answered, still observing her.

"My mother and Mabel will be so sorry when they hear of it, they are out now, visiting some intolerable old women in the village."

"Which is very good of them," murmured Brandon, "and indicates an enormous amount of self-sacrifice when the thermometer stands at 80° in the shade."

"Your decision is very sudden is it not, are you obliged to return so soon?"

"To do a thing suddenly implies a certain amount of rash haste, which my soul abhors; no—I conveyed the afflicting intelligence to Youngashe a fortnight ago; and there is really no 'obligation' in the matter, save my own inclination."

"I fancied you two were inseparable; surely Mr. Youngashe will not tire of Drayton so soon as you have done, and go back to America also?" she asked, with a shade of anxiety in her eyes.

"No, I fancy not," he answered in the same quiet way; "our positions are very different, Youngashe has a place here, which he will also make his home, wherefore he has definite prospects in store: were I in his place I might do the same—if I saw any chance of realizing my ambitions—supposing I ever entertained any; as it is I am

a wanderer—with no intentions," he added coolly, and waited to see the effect.

"Isn't it almost a pity? Though I can understand you might be very much bored here; as you say, your positions are totally different, Drayton is not your home, and can never interest you in the same degree. Besides, I think it wretched, hateful for a man to lead an aimless life and settle down contentedly wherever chance lands him, as if he were a cabbage or a caterpillar."

"Yet the human cabbage leads a very pleasant life, there's so little agitation about it that the prospect is almost alluring," said Brandon, smiling at her dreamily.

After a little pause she went on—"Your announcement seems abrupt at last, yet I never expected you to stay long." Here she got up and moved restlessly about the room, rearranged some flowers on a bracket, then returning, she leaned against the piano and looked at Brandon. She was conscious of a curious inexplicable excitement, an almost pleasurable sensation, though his going away affected her to an extent she had scarcely believed possible; yet she resented the feeling, she was almost angry this man should have such power over her, and be able to rouse and excite her at will, whilst he retained his hateful composure and indifference. She was never so near loving him as at that minute,

What Ethel Comyn would have really liked would have been for Brandon to propose to her—to be refused—and go away humiliated and miserable! Her triumph and this evidence of her power, she thought, would help to console her for the dulness of the after-life with Youngashe. But their positions were somehow horribly reversed, she could not force him to speak—yet there had been moments—Ethel recalled them vividly now—in which he had almost betrayed himself.

"You have been terribly bored here, I am afraid!"

"On the contrary, I go away retaining a delightfully vivid impression of one unique spot in which I have never experienced even an hour's ennui."

"Then Mr. Youngashe is not send—I mean, you don't go to oblige him," persisted Ethel, with a little tremble in her voice.

Brandon had risen too, and was standing near, looking down at her with genuine regret. How beautiful she seemed to him to-day—all her natural advantages heightened by her disappointment and the little excitement of the moment! She was positively alluring now, and Brandon had never thought her so dear or desirable as at this last moment; he felt an almost irresistible desire to take her in his arms and kiss her. The bare suggestion sent the blood tingling through his veins, but he put his hands into his pockets with a dogged air and moved back a step or two. If she were only true! If some better motive than mere vanity or ambition could ever move her! he thought bitterly; but he only answered, "No, Youngashe isn't sending me, though he is, I believe, lord of two manors, and enjoys boundless power over his serfs—so that he says to one 'Come,' and he cometh, and to another 'Go,' and he goeth—yet the dear old fellow never exercises those rights where I am concerned; I

suspect he has a tenderness for my queer Yankee prejudices, being himself a hybrid American."

She felt the implied rebuke, and answered meekly, "I fancied you were going back to Colorado—to San Juan."

"I shall run down and look at the ranche some time this autumn, but I am wanted elsewhere. I see by my letters to-day, some mining dispute has arisen down South, and they look for the moral support of my presence in that haven of jail-birds and last refuge of all the scum of the earth—a mining community."

"Will you never come back?" She looked at him with an almost imploring air. "I envy you! I wish I could go away too."

"To San Juan—to the cattle ranch?"

"Anywhere! Any kind of life is better than this, where we stagnate from day to day." For the minute there was real pathos in her voice, and it moved Brandon, but he only answered, "I am afraid you would find San Juan dull. There is no society on a ranch, Miss Comyn."

"It is not society that matters, but the people one has to spend one's life with," murmured Ethel, plaintively.

He looked at her, half amused and wholly distrustful. "Ah, that is precisely my difficulty. I shall think of you at San Juan."

"Yes! I envy any man who is free to come and go as he pleases. To be a woman, and forced to stay at home, is horrible! I envy you."

"I wish I could believe it," he said earnestly, coming a step nearer and looking into her eyes.

She did not answer, but looked away from him into the garden.

"'Good-bye' is always a hard word to say at the end of an acquaintance which has been wholly delightful, but I am afraid I must say it now," said Brandon, who had no mind to prolong the scene, delightful as it might be to the lady.

A word from Ethel might have kept him then, but she would not say it. She only gave him her hand, answering, "Good-bye, then. Mr. Youngashe will miss you terribly."

He held the cool hand loosely for a moment as he rejoined, "I hope you will try to console him. Good-bye." And he had gone out quietly through the garden before Ethel realized the "good-bye" was final, and that Brandon was lost to her.

Youngashe was absent when Brandon returned to Drayton Court, and when his host put in an appearance long after the usual dinner-hour, Brandon instantly perceived a subdued excitement in his manner; in fact, he was quite curiously elated, and laughed and talked more gaily than usual during dinner, and was obviously only waiting for the departure of the servants to unburden his soul of something special; hence his friend felt a little dull curiosity as to what the news might be. The solemn butler, who acted usually as a moral wet-blanket, and in whose magnificent presence his master was wont "to refrain his soul and keep it low like a weaned child," had scarcely departed before Youngashe pushed back his chair from the table, and, after taking a turn about the room and staring absently at the pictures, came up to Brandon, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said, "Well, old boy, it's our last bachelor dinner. I've done it now!"

"Done what?" demanded Brandon.

"Well, I've negotiated a stiffish fence. I—I—

the fact is, old man, I'm engaged!" He was smiling very much, and looking brightly at Brandon as he spoke.

"Indeed," said that gentleman in his coolest way, "and who is the happy woman? You must pardon me if the rapidity of your action has, metaphorically speaking, taken away my breath."

"Yes, I can't help being a little surprised myself, now I come to think of it," he returned, laughing and reddening a little; "but I couldn't let you go away to-morrow without telling you. I never thought of bolting into the thing as I did to-day—fate, I suppose!"

"Kismet," returned Brandon, and he lit his cigar solemnly. "And the lady, my guileless one?" he asked, watching the curling smoke clouds with a placid air.

"Why, of course—it's Ethel—Miss Comyn," returned Youngashe, and he began to walk nervously about the room, making desperate but futile attempts to smoke an unlighted cigar, while he continued his explanations. "You see, old man, I went down to the village after you, and when I reached the vicarage you had already vanished."

"I came back by the fields," said Brandon briefly.

"Ethel said you were disappointed at not seeing her mother and sister, and you left almost directly; she fancied you'd gone to meet them."

"The deuce she did!" muttered Brandon sotto voce.

"So—she was alone you see—and—oh, hang it all! I don't know how it happened; but I believe I'm the happiest fellow in the county to-night."

"Yes! men in your position always think so before they have time to become bored by the affair."

"Hang it, Brandon! I thought you admired the girl yourself, and the long and—"

"So I do immensely—pray don't excite yourself."

"The long and the short of it is, I should never have spoken, I think—at least I never meant to speak while you were here. I had a notion you cared for her, and—and I wasn't going to stand in your light—so I hung back."

"Awfully considerate of you to keep your charms in the background for my benefit," said Brandon dryly.

"Eh! well, confound it!" cried the honest young fellow. "You know what I mean—you are above me all round; I felt afraid my only recommendation was Drayton Court, and I didn't want to be accepted for that. But I find I was utterly mistaken. She was surprised I ever fancied it; she—she told me so," he said, hesitating a little. "You know I've never seen a woman to touch Ethel anywhere, it was a case of 'love at first sight,' only I was afraid she'd never look at me—now she says she cared all along—but she wouldn't encourage me a bit, just because I wasn't poor. There's a fine nature for you! That splendid girl has been fighting shy of me, in spite of her matchmaking mother, on account of my possessions. I was quite amazed when I discovered the truth."

"Dear old boy," said Brandon almost tenderly, "I congratulate you very heartily—in my dull way, and hope you may be happy—I don't think

a fellow could easily be hipped with Miss Comyn."

"No," said Youngashe, with a glow of pride lighting up his honest face. "She's just the cleverest girl I ever met, as well as the handsomest, it was her cleverness made me think she was precisely the woman for you."

"I assure you, Moses, the lady never had the slightest penchant for a stupid old fellow like myself, and she and you have my best wishes for the future."

And Brandon's last words at the station next morning, uttered in his most characteristic manner, were:—

"I hope, old man, you'll find the whole thing a brilliant success, especially the finish of that ceremony which ends in 'amazement'; anyway, I trust you won't be dull, for the best and dearest old fellow in the world deserves something better than boredom."



MISTS.

RIVER MISTS.

WHEN at eve the river sleeps,
Quiet watch the white mist keeps,
Gently guarding lest
Winds should break its rest.

Guarding lest the moonlight wan
Its pure beauty might look on,
Or in it stars behold
Their own lamps of gold.

And the water o'er its stones
'Neath it falls in sweeter tones.
Babbling in half tunes,
Whispering mystic runes.

And the trees bent o'er the edge
Whisper also, to the sedge,
And the water's plaint
Groweth still more faint.

Moon and nightwinds to enchant
Come this fairest visitant,
While the dew fills up
Every bright flower cup.

THE MIST IN TOWN.

HEAVY, dull the mist comes down
Over all the noisy town,
Drifting thick and dun
To shut out the sun.

Over by-way, lane, and street
Muffling the quick tramp of feet
While the gas-lamp shines,
In long feeble lines.

As through cauldron's smoke might slit
Things of awful import, it—
Necromancy strange—
Works amazing change.

Fairy thron'd on fungus stool
Ne'er knew charm so wonderful,
Nor could witch conceive
How such spell to weave.

Towers and steeples dimly loom
Metamorphos'd by the gloom
To the strangest things,
Mad imaginings.

Pinnacles a crowded band
Hang in this weird wonderland,
And they all have pass'd
Into gemii vast.

Monument, and dome and spire,
All are changed to spirits dire,
Crowding everywhere
In the murky air.

'Neath the lamps' eyes blank and blind
Can these be of human kind
That grow up so plain,
Pass, and fade again.

So the mist floats over all
A festive garment or a pall
As it is defined
By man's changeable mind.

Over love, joy, sorrow, vice,
Splendour, squalor, avarice,
Over all we can
Feel in being man.

T.E.M.

"THE PRINCE OF FABLE."**A STORY OF THE AUTHOR OF "ATALA."**By the Author of "*A Modern Minister.*"**TRIUMPH.**

LONDON: The year eighteen hundred and twenty-three: Theatre Royal, Covent Garden—Charles Kemble's management. Month, July—eveling, nine o'clock, between the first and second acts of *Semiramide*.

A house crowded to the ceiling; one box only vacant, and that the royal one; tastefully appointed in readiness, for Majesty and suite would attend the performance that evening in honour of the French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's.

Great interest attached to the event; this noble diplomatist had been received with unusual homage, and his visit throughout was marked by an extraordinary magnificence. King George and his ministers vied in their attention to the distinguished author of *Atala*, whose firebrand pamphlet, *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, was declared by Louis XVIII. to have been equal to an army of one hundred thousand men in paving the way for the return of his dynasty to the throne. Never had our nation so extolled the representative of a foreign power, and had it been the monarch in person, greater reverence could not have been displayed. Crimson cloth and trappings of gold marked his progress through the city. The populace turned out in their tens of thousands to welcome the laureate of the people. Good folk of a loyal turn hung banners along the

line of route. Pretty children strewed roses in his path, singing a composition from his *Atala*. Dames of high estate and the fairest daughters of London presented him with bouquets of choice flowers. Complimentary addresses poured upon him, and in every detail the triumph was one of intoxicating completeness. The people, high and low, were hysterical in their enthusiasm, house-tops and windows one range of waving handkerchiefs. The splendid Arabians from the Pavilion stables were backed from the thoroughfare, and his carriage drawn by young men of the universities. A laurel crown in massive gold was tendered to him by the poets and writers of England.

Chateaubriand himself was not less royal; his prodigality surpassed that of the princes of Eastern fable. With his retinue were five almoners for the proper distribution of his bounty; the poor blessed his very name, and the prayerful thanks of widows and orphans were as an incense before him.

Every morning he received in person authors, artists, actors, and others of similar station, whose means were contracted, whose lives were embittered by that direst foe to genius—poverty, and he helped them all.

One favourite pleasure of the Viscount was to proceed through Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the adjoining streets in a close carriage, at twilight-time, scattering handfuls of silver amongst the teeming poor.

There was no limit to his munificence, and such eccentric liberality has never been surpassed by a monarch's lavish extravagance.

It may be imagined that this unusual policy did not lessen the favourable opinion in which the minister of the French Court was already esteemed. Upon the night in question, the vast patient crowd without the theatre was not collected to cheer the king, any more than the large concourse within was assembled to listen to the opera, fresh though it was to the English people.

The Viscount de Chateaubriand was the attraction.

Conservatories had yielded of their choicest upon the occasion; all the circle was one splendid shower of bloom, intermixed with gems and plumes, and rich silks and satins, and the dead radiance of gold. A more brilliant gathering could not have been brought together.

Topics of interest to talk over between the acts: Not a month before, the king had presented the British Museum with his father's library—a stroke of policy very like that of my Lord Cardinal in the Hampton affair—and the Exchequer had granted forty thousand pounds to build a new wing for its reception. John Philip Kemble's death had caused widespread regret, and proportionate gossip in fashionable circles. John Jervis, Earl St. Vincent, had also passed from among his compeers; and Mrs. Radcliffe, the favourite romancist, who had so often sat in this house to applaud the old artists. Conversation was also brisk upon the Dublin scandal, where the Marquis of Wellesley, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had been hissed and pelted by an audience. But, eventually, all the talk gave place to the one topic of present interest—the grand theme of the evening—the approaching arrival of the celebrity.

Not a few notabilities in that assembly. Is

yonder box the Right Hon. George Canning, one of His Majesty's Secretaries of State; the beautiful blonde beside him, his niece, an Irish heiress; the fine-featured young man pushing aside the lace, his son, Charles John; the elderly gentleman behind, their friend, the Duke of Devonshire.

In the next box Mrs. Fitzherbert and party, eminently select, and sitting far back, with vigorous use of the plain black fan.

Further on, Percy Clinton, Viscount Strangford, British Ambassador at the Sublime Porte; with him Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, Governor of Greenwich Hospital.

Opposite, Joseph Hume, the member for the Montrose burghs.

Upon the same tier, Lord Francis Leveson-Gower, Henry Lytton Bulwer, and Lord Wellesley; and, near these, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, with Louis Philippe, Duc d'Orleans, and the distinguished Marie Thérèse, Princess of Orleans.

A group of Frenchmen present, out of compliment to the illustrious visitor, were the subject of interested remark. Victor-Marie Hugo, Alphonse Lamartine, the Marquis de Jouffroy, and Francois-Pierre Guizot; and in the contiguous division, Honoré de Balzac, Pierre Jean de Béranger, Jules Michelet, Amédée Thierry, and Eugène Scribe, and one or two other famous Frenchmen; a characteristic group of observant reflective Parisians it composed.

Another point of interest was the box of Mrs. Siddons; that resplendent creature never dazzled more effectually. Few of those watching her with so admiring a scrutiny imagined how closely her distinguishing trait of goodness had been allied with the distinguished guest of the evening.

With her might be seen Thomas Moore, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and Thomas Campbell.

Near by was the box of Sir Robert Peel, adjoining which that of Earl Grey, who with Lords Brougham and Lansdowne, and young Macaulay fresh from Cambridge, busily conversed upon the startling issues of the current number of the *Journal des Débats*.

Highly representative was a box upon the second tier, where Rogers, Hallam, and John Wilson formed a little tea-table set of their own.

All round the house were seen those familiar by wealth, position, genius, high birth, and rare beauty; the very flower of the Court of St. James's. It was the most glittering night in the annals of the house, one of those triumph times that comes so seldom, and the passage-way to which has been so often paved with poverty, with sorrow, sighs, and tears.

Eagerly was the Royal box watched. There, if nothing prevented, those who had never seen Chateaubriand would see him that night.

A quiver—a hush—a thrill—all the circles are astir, fans are laid down, pocket handkerchiefs cease to flutter, no one speaks above a whisper, all eyes are directed towards the Royal box.

One impulse, and that of intense curiosity and eagerness, animates the house: the musicians take slant looks upward, and patrons of the uppermost gallery lean over to the imminent risk of toppling, and yet an usher of the house had but opened one of the double doors that at the period flanked the Royal box.

Then another gentleman appeared, also connected with the house, wearing plain evening dress, and looking altogether very suave, and as duly impressed by the weight and dignity of the occasion; and yet a third, in attendance upon this one, who flustered about with the enamel and gilt chairs, adjusted the tapestry and lace, and stood on one side for another purple-coated, gilt-buttoned, highly fussy personage, who spread out, with infinite care, a satin programme upon the velvet pile in front; these made way for a very long-countenanced, clerical-like Master of Ceremonies on behalf of the other side, who seriously walked once round the box, looked at himself in the mirror, appeared frightened, and walked out again. Then the great Mr. Kemble himself, who, with a considerable show of immensity, advanced to see that all was in apple-pie order, and departed closely followed by the retainers. Some, too enthusiastic, produced a small cheer; this died from lack of encouragement, and breathless quietude again prevailed.

Then, with no other forewarning, the Royal party arrived.

Two lords in waiting preceded his Majesty King George IV., with whom was an attendant nobleman; two French gentlemen, in attendance upon his Excellency the French Ambassador, the Viscount de Chateaubriand, followed by his private attendant; the Prince William, with an attending gentleman; two other members of the Court bringing up the rear. The three gentlemen in attendance having withdrawn, the doors of the box were softly closed.

The King, half-way towards the front of the box, stood at his robust height, and took a swift, keen glance round the house.

Nearly all present were known to him; he seemed a trifling degree annoyed at the limited homage evoked by his presence, and withdrew to the shadow of the curtain; the very commonplace face and somewhat vulgar person were too intimately known to his subjects to arouse any excitement. The Prince next came to view. It was a well-bred crowd, an audience of the ultrafastidious, not in the least disposed to be put off with the distant cousinship of royalty; these had, if anything, been a little too common to the nation.

But there was one present who was not to be thought of in the same breath, and when, quite by the inevitable grace of seating himself between the Princes, the hero of the evening came to view, one of the most hearty cheers ever heard within a building broke as by a signal from the assembly; it would have been mock modesty to have ignored that, and the King himself gracefully requested Chateaubriand to acknowledge it. Bowing first to the Sovereign, the Ambassador of France next advanced a pace or two and stood before the people, who broke forth once more in a cordial, inspiriting greeting; then, with a hand upon his heart, the author of *Atala* bowed low before the English. One hears but by tradition of the elegance of this gesture, natural to the *ancien régime*, in which all the grace and exquisite polish of the Courts of every age seemed to be concentrated; never master of this finest of the fine arts surpassed the Prince of Fable. There was so much devotion, homage and honour in the attitude, all the house was complimented; and it was not the

glitter of the diamonds upon his breast that dazzled, or the grand pensive face before which Europe stood charmed, it was the pure fresh genius that had caught the heart of the people.

And of all that crowded house the eyes of the poet singled the most shadowy and obscure of the boxes, high up, and veiled by drawn curtains. In a glance he had penetrated the seclusion, seen the beauty so unlike any in the house, heightened by the sable garments of her widowhood; he knew her in an instant, after all the lapse of years, although two handsome sons, grown to man's estate, were paying her fond attention, one adjusting the fall of woollen lace upon her shoulders, the other handing her refreshment. The eyes of master and pupil met, and since the days of Abelard and Heloise no secret recognition ever thrilled two hearts as on this night.

Both were changed. He had gained the summit of all ambition. She was Lady Sutton, the widow of Admiral Sutton; and looking back upon that dream-time in the Suffolk woods, as to a dim era of some previous state, it all came back so vividly with its beauty and blinding pain, its music of voice, far, oh, so far above this music, she grew faint and pale, her sons thought she was ill, and aware of her delicate health, sought to persuade her to depart.

Taking his seat, the Viscount caught Mrs. Siddons observing him with an expression half-droll, half ironic, and he bowed to the famous tragedienne with the deference he entertained from the first to the last.

A BUNDLE OF TRIOLETS.

I.

O NE weary winter evening
Is sweeter than a summer day,
For then I heard Aglaia sing
One weary winter evening.
What wonder since so sweet a thing
Could turn December into May
One weary winter evening
Is sweeter than a summer day?

II.

The sea on the beach
Flung the foam of its ire.
We watched without speech
The sea on the beach,
And we clung each to each
As the tempest shrilled higher,
And the sea on the beach,
Flung the foam of its ire.

III.

I saw her shadow on the grass
That day we walked together.
Across the field where the pond was
I saw her shadow on the grass.
And now I sigh and say, alas!
That e'er in summer weather
I saw her shadow on the grass
That day we walked together,

IV.

Hope bowed his head in sleep:
Ah me and welaway!
Although I cannot weep
Hope bowed his head in sleep.
The heavy hours creep:
When is the break of day?
Hope bowed his head in sleep,
Ah me and welaway!

V.

When Love is once dead
Who shall awake him?
Bitter our bread
When Love is once dead:
His comforts are fled,
His favours forsake him.
When love is once dead
Who shall awake him?

VI.

Love is a swallow
Flitting with spring.
Though we would follow
Love is a swallow,
All his vows hollow.
Then let us sing,
Love is a swallow
Flitting with spring.

VII.

The heat is like a flaming cloud
Spread out upon the plains below.
Where jarring grasshoppers are loud
The heat is like a flaming cloud,
The slender stems are burnt and bowed,
Earth pants, yet merry-make we, thou,
The heat is like a flaming cloud
Spread out upon the plains below.

VIII.

The man who carves on cherry-stones
Would make the neatest triolets.
What dainty sleight of skill atone
The man who carves on cherry-stones!
On one clear harp of divers tones
With fingers fine that nothing frets,
The man who carves on cherry-stones
Would make the neatest triolets.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

THE WEINSTADT PROFESSOR.

BY ANNETTE CALTHROP

THE sudden death, one July morning, of old Professor Kratzer, made a considerable stir in his native town of Weinstadt, in South Germany. He left behind him a large circle of friends and acquaintances to deplore his loss, but he also left—and to this fact may mainly be attributed the excitement consequent on his decease—a vacancy in the staff of professors at the Grand Ducal College. The question who was to succeed Professor Kratzer in the Chair of Natural Science, filled by him for upwards of twenty years, absorbed the Weinstädtian mind—a mind at all times keenly alive to topics of educational interest,

Among the local celebrities who attended the professor's funeral was the Minister of War, or, to give him his full title, the Herr Kriegsminister von Tellenbach. He was a young, good-looking man, with a tall, vigorous frame, a sallow complexion, waving brown hair, brown eyes, and a long, dark moustache. His face would have been still more handsome but for a disfiguring scar on one cheek—a reminiscence of university days of duelling.

When the service was over, Von Tellenbach, having exchanged greetings with sundry of his neighbours who were present at the grave, turned into the dusty road leading, between vineyards, from the cemetery to the town. He had come afoot, and he trusted to the same means of locomotion to effect his return.

"*Guten Tag, Herr Kriegsminister,*" said a voice in his ear. Turning, he found himself addressed by an individual of his acquaintance—a short, stout man, with grey hair, a red face, and small round grey eyes.

Von Tellenbach responded shortly; his proverbial geniality was not always proof against a sense of his own importance.

"I don't know whether you have heard, Herr Kriegsminister," went on the first speaker, "that I have applied for Herr Kratzer's place at the college?"

"*You have applied!*" The emphasis was not flattering. Von Tellenbach's companion, Herr Moser, gained a scanty livelihood by giving lessons, in a variety of subjects, at second-rate schools in the town. It struck Von Tellenbach as presumptuous that he should aspire to fill so important a position as that hitherto occupied by Professor Kratzer. Herr Moser had not impressed the discerning among his acquaintances with any high regard for his qualities, intellectual or moral. He bore the character of a tyrant in his own house—his wife's habitually woe-begone expression confirming the report—and his mental acquirements had their very distinct limits.

"Yes, *gnädiger Herr*. The appointment is nominally in the hands of the Grand Duke, but your influence with His Highness is well known, and if I may count on your support, I—"

"I can make no promises," interrupted Von Tellenbach. "Why! I don't know yet what candidates are in the field."

"There will be few local candidates, Herr Kriegsminister. My most formidable opponent is an Emil Braun, from Bonn. But as he is a stranger here, I thought—"

"I can make no promises, I say. But"—in a tone suggestive of dismissal—"I will think over the matter."

"A thousand thanks."

With the scanty crumbs of comfort afforded by the prospect of a great man's future thoughts the aspirant was forced to content himself. He walked on in silence—his spirits sinking rather low—till the Ludwig Strasse was reached, at the further end of which Von Tellenbach lived. The street was in the best part of the town; it led to the wide *Platz*, where were trees and fountains, and the Grand Ducal palace, and where a military band played twice daily—but its appearance was rather picturesque than imposing. Its houses and shops, by no means uniform in date, were of all sizes and fashions. The Ludwig Strasse was

narrow, and it lay in deep shadow on this sultry July day. Just as the two men entered the street, they were passed by a young girl, shabbily dressed in a brown stuff gown and a broad-brimmed white straw hat. She carried a roll of music in her hand. The girl was singularly pretty, with fair hair, a delicate complexion, deep grey, rather sad eyes, and long, dark lashes.

Here Moser doffed his hat with a flourish.

"Do you know the Fräulein?" asked Von Tellenbach, in a tone of quick interest. He himself knew the girl well by sight. She had a lodgings over a tailor's shop, just opposite his own rooms. Morning by morning he watched for her face to appear in the window, with the green box of mignonette on the sill, above the painted name of "Karl Hundt, Schneider." The pretty sad face touched his fancy. Sometimes Von Tellenbach went so far as to tell himself that his heart, not only his fancy, had been touched; and once, when he was in a sentimental mood—as what true German is not sometimes?—he was struck, when turning over a copy in the original of "*As You Like It*," a play then in course of representation in German at the Weinstadt theatre, with a new sense of the force of the lines, in which Phœbe, referring to a "saw" of Marlowe's, then lately dead, says:

"Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?"

"What is the Fräulein's name, and how do you come to know her?"

"She is a Fräulein Paraquin, Herr Minister; she gives music lessons in some half-dozen schools and families in the town. I met her the other day at Frau Steinacker's, where I am delivering a course of science lectures to the first class. I heard that the Fräulein is an orphan, of a good Bavarian family, and that she came to Weinstadt by the advice of Frau Steinacker, who was a friend of her mother's. The Frau has given her many useful introductions: already the girl has a fair number of pupils, and she is engaged to play for the Baronin von Mühlmann's dance on the 18th."

"For the Baronin's dance!" Von Tellenbach's face lighted. Of course, he had been invited to the dance. Young, good-looking, influential, wealthy, and a bachelor, he was greatly in request at the *Kaffee Visites* and evening parties of the neighbourhood. With the Baronin von Mühlmann—a lady whose position in Weinstadtian society was, in her own estimation, second only to that of the Grand Duchess—he was supreme favourite; and the Baronin's three daughters—lively, comely maidens, with expectations of substantial dowries—always welcomed the Herr Kriegsminister with unstinting recognition of his high claims to social consideration.

At the open door of a tall stone house, many stories high, the two men parted. Von Tellenbach made his way up the broad staircase, common to all the occupants in the house, to his rooms on the first étage. He was soon seated—cigar in mouth and newspaper in hand—in an easy chair, by the window of a large, well-appointed room, with a polished floor, a stove, well-stocked book-shelves, a writing-table, and a number of high-backed oak chairs. From his post of observation, his eyes often wandered from the printed columns towards

the window over the tailor's shop. Presently, he saw a young man, with a thin, stooping figure, high shoulders, a pale face, and longish fair hair, enter Hundt's shop. A few minutes later the stranger's face appeared, with that of Fräulein Paraquin, above the box of mignonette. The unusual presence disturbed Von Tellenbach. The Fräulein had few visitors; her neighbour could not remember ever seeing a gentleman in her room before. Who was the stranger? And yet—Von Tellenbach rose and shook himself, with a smile at his own curiosity—his identity was a matter of small importance. The War Minister changed his dress, walked to a restaurant in the Wilhelm Platz, where he supped—all the world dines at mid-day in Weinstadt—on green corn soup, sausages, and *sauerkraut*, chicken and lettuce, cheese of strange hue and taste, and a bottle of Rüdesheim—and then went off to the theatre, where the German representation, already mentioned, of "*Wie es ench gefallt*"—"As You Like It"—was to be given. The Grand Duke honoured the performance with his presence; he soon espied Von Tellenbach, and sent for the War Minister to his box. His Highness was a well-known patron of the drama; he followed the play with critical interest, but his attention was occasionally allowed to wander from the occupants of the stage to the occupants of the house.

"That's a pretty girl in the front row of the first gallery," said the Grand Duke, in an undertone, to Von Tellenbach, in the midst of the delivery, by the melancholy Jaques, of the famous speech on the Seven Ages.

Von Tellenbach looked round. In the position indicated sat the Fräulein Paraquin; with her was her visitor of that afternoon. On nearer view, the stranger was discovered to have a plain but a clever and attractive face. His mild blue eyes were weakened by study; his face was very pale, his features irregular, his expression shy and pre-occupied. It was easy to see that the young man was on intimate terms with his companion. It occurred to Von Tellenbach that he might possibly be her brother, and the idea was consolatory; but one fact militated against its full acceptance; there was no resemblance suggestive of kinship between the Fräulein and the stranger.

The play went briskly on. Pictorial art was less lavishly displayed than on the English stage, but dramatic art had worthy exponents. Rosalind, especially, was delightfully portrayed; the representation was declared, by the appreciative Grand Duke, to be "*ganz reizend*."

At length the curtain fell, and the audience made their way out of the theatre. Von Tellenbach was delayed by gracious parting speeches from the Grand Duke. Fräulein Paraquin and her companion had left the house before he was released. At the outer door the War Minister knocked against Herr Moser, and was nodding good-night in lofty fashion, when a thought struck him, and he paused. "You seem to know every one," he said carelessly. "Can you tell me the name of the gentleman—you saw him, I suppose—who was with Fräulein Paraquin this evening?"

Moser's countenance clouded. "Yes, *gnädiger Herr Minister*," he said, "I have just heard the gentleman is Emil Braun, from Bonn, who is

offering himself for the vacant post at the college. He arrived in Weinstadt this afternoon."

Braun! an individual so named could not be brother of an unmarried lady named Paraquin. Dismissing his theory and Herr Moser together, Von Tellenbach moved off with a short "*Gute Nacht*."

A new theory soon took the place of Von Tellenbach's first surmise. On the next day Herr Braun's visit to the Ludwig Strasse was repeated. On the next day, and on the next, he came again. "Herr Braun is *betrothed* to the Fräulein," said Von Tellenbach to himself. "The matter is no business of mine, but some one should represent it to the Fräulein in its true light. The girl is without a chaperone; these constant visits may compromise her—poor child."

So matters stood when the day arrived for the Baronin's dance. The Baronin was, as we have said, a magnate in Weinstadt society; her parties, given in a picturesque wooden house just outside the town, with large, low, old-fashioned rooms and lattice windows, were always well attended. On this evening, the guests were more than usually numerous; among the first arrivals came Herr Kriegsminister von Tellenbach.

The Baronin—a portly dame with a round face, a high color, and bright black eyes—flitted from group to group of her guests, to provide partners for would-be dancers, to promote conversation, and to receive from the most intimate of her lady friends loudly whispered compliments on the re-decoration and general reconstruction of her dress of vivid blue silk, which had done duty on many previous festive occasions.

At the piano sat Fräulein Paraquin, looking very pretty and shy, in a well-worn black silk dress, with old-fashioned pearl ornaments.

Dance succeeded dance. At last supper was announced; new duties devolved on the hostess, who looked about her solicitous for the fitting distribution of her guests. "Herr Kriegsminister, will you take—" she began, and suddenly broke off. "Ach," she said, "the Herr is engaged already; he is offering his arm to Fräulein Paraquin, the pianist. How kind of him to choose the Fräulein."

The Baronin's tone was not in full harmony with her professed appreciation of Von Tellenbach's kindness; she glanced a little thoughtfully towards her daughter Maria, who, on occasions like the present, was generally to be seen in close proximity with the Herr Minister.

For Von Tellenbach the event of the evening had come. A look of proud satisfaction was on his handsome face as he bent his head over his companion. As for Anna Paraquin, she was visibly flattered. Maria von Mühlmann had introduced Von Tellenbach to her at his own request; she knew him well by sight, and he seemed to her a very illustrious and, consequently, a very formidable person indeed. All at once she became painfully conscious of the shabbiness of her dress, and of the presence, on one shoe, of a conspicuous patch.

Von Tellenbach led Anna into a panelled room, down which were arranged plentifully supplied supper tables. He found her a place at a side table, by an open window, through which the sweet scent of flowers came from a garden dimly seen in the indistinct light.

The War Minister did his best to interest his

companion, and in such an endeavour he seldom stopped short of success. He was a polished man of the world, gifted with talents, over which his presence of mind—outcome of varied experience—gave him full command. His manner towards Anna was full of deference, and yet so easy and winning, that it could not ultimately fail, to set her at her ease. Presently, she even began to open conversation for herself. Then Von Tellenbach proved as good a listener as he was a talker. The girl told him of her schooldays at Geisenheim, a little village on the Rhine, of her only brother, who had been an assistant professor at Heidelberg, of her mother's death and of her flight to Weinstadt.

Von Tellenbach's captivation was complete. Already he mentally declared himself a suitor for the Fräulein's hand. He knew that her social position—to say nothing of her pecuniary standing—was inferior to his own. But he told himself that his position was sufficiently assured to allow him the exercise of his own taste in the choice of a wife.

The name of Emil Braun did not pass Anna's lips, and Von Tellenbach found no way, without appearing unduly inquisitive, of deciding the question of her relationship to the stranger. Truth to tell, he was content, in his present neighbourhood, to ignore altogether the fact of Emil Braun's existence.

"I am very fortunate to have found employment so readily in Weinstadt," the girl said in her gentle voice. "Frau Steinacker is very good; she has introduced me to many pupils, and—"

Von Tellenbach pushed away his plate; he was bending forward in his chair, his hands clasped across his knee, his eyes fixed intently on Anna's face.

"It is we in Weinstadt who are fortunate," he said, in a tone which seemed too eager for one of purely conventional compliment. "I only wish that it were in my power, as it is in that of Frau Steinacker, to be of service to you."

Anna lifted her eyes quickly; her face flushed; her lips moved. For a moment it seemed that she was about to test the value of her companion's protestations. But, after a pause, she only said, "*Ich danke sehr,*" in a tone of some embarrassment.

Just then there was a general move from the supper table, and the Baronin came bustling up. "Are you ready, Fräulein?" she asked; and there was—or so Anna thought—an unusual sharpness in her voice. "The young people are asking for a waltz."

Von Tellenbach rose, with evident reluctance, and offered the girl his arm. But before he had reached the piano, a fan was laid, with a light touch, upon Anna's arm. "Let me play this one waltz, and do you dance, Fräulein," said Maria von Mühlmann's good-natured voice.

In a few minutes Anna was whirling round the room as Von Tellenbach's partner. When she returned to the piano, her cheeks were aglow with the unwonted exertion, and the remembrance of certain words and looks which had formed part of her unwonted experience.

That night, Anna Paraquin slept fitfully; strains of music, the sound of a deep, low, tender voice haunted her dreams.

Von Tellenbach, on the contrary, slept well, and

woke in excellent spirits. Anna set off early in the morning for Frau Steinacker's, and he greeted her from his window with an elaborate bow. When he returned in the afternoon to his room his first glance was towards the window over Karl Hundt's shop.

He had not been home half an hour when a card bearing the name Emil Braun was brought to him, and its proprietor followed closely on the servant's heels. Von Tellenbach looked up in sudden dissatisfaction: an unwelcome suspicion of the nature of the stranger's errand occurred to him.

Herr Braun was shabbily dressed in threadbare black, an anxious look was on his pale face, and in his mild eyes; he crushed a soft black felt hat nervously in his hand.

Von Tellenbach rose. "Please be seated," he said, with a formal little bow.

Braun drew forward one of the high-backed oak chairs. The sound which it made on the polished floor seemed to startle him; evidently he was highly nervous.

Von Tellenbach, who had resumed his seat by the window, and was lounging back, his legs crossed, and the palms of his hands together, watched him curiously.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked at length, a little impatiently, as time went on and the visitor showed no sign of disclosing his errand.

Braun turned over his hat and fixed his eyes on its lining. "I must apologize for my intrusion, Herr Kriegsminister," he said. "I should not have ventured to take advantage of the fact that we were fellow students at the university but for—"

"Were we fellow students?" asked Von Tellenbach, looking full at his visitor. "Braun" was a common name, and had not, as yet, called up any especial reminiscence.

"I don't wonder that you have forgotten me; we were not in the same set," Braun answered humbly. "But—"

The stranger's nervous manner helped Von Tellenbach in his task of retrospection. "Braun—Braun—I remember you now," he said graciously. "You may well say that we were not in the same set. Why, you carried off no end of university distinctions, and I just managed to scramble through necessary examinations."

At the university, Braun had been a very distinguished student. Naturally retiring, his gentle lovable nature failed to attract universal recognition, but wherever he was really known he was esteemed and liked.

Something of this Von Tellenbach knew, or vaguely remembered to have heard.

"You are probably aware," went on Braun, gaining courage, "that I have offered myself for an appointment as Professor of Natural Science in your town. I have taken the liberty"—producing a little packet of papers, and laying them on a table near—"of bringing you my certificates and testimonials. You are, as I have heard, on intimate terms with the Grand Duke, in whose hands the appointment lies, and I should be greatly obliged if you would mention my name favourably to His Highness. I do not, as I say, venture to apply to you on the ground of our slight acquaintance at the university. But—"

"I know," interrupted Von Tellenbach, glad at last to give expression to the suspicion which had crossed his mind at the moment of Braun's entrance, "you come from Fräulein Paraquin. What you ask—you ask at her instigation."

The speaker's tone sounded almost resentful, and Braun looked up perturbed.

"Yes," he said. "Anna"—Von Tellenbach scowled at the familiar mention of the Fräulein's name—"did send me to you. Did she presume too far on your goodness?" She told me that she had had the honour of meeting you in society yesterday, and that you had kindly offered to be of service to her."

Von Tellenbach rose. He stood by the window, his hands behind his back, his eyes gazing over the Ludwig Strasse, with its tall houses and deep shadows.

"And I am to serve *her* in serving *you*?" he asked curtly.

"If you will be so good."

"The appointment is of importance to you?"

"Of very great importance, Herr Minister. My—my—marriage depends upon it."

"Your marriage?"

"Yes, sir." Braun had risen; he leaned his arm along the back of his chair. "I have been for years betrothed to my cousin Anna. Hitherto, we have been too poor to marry. The nomination to the professorship takes place in a fortnight. If I gain the post, my cousin Anna consents to marry me in three weeks' time."

Engaged to my cousin Anna! So the murder was out at last! The announcement was received by Von Tellenbach without visible disturbance. "Three weeks! That is very soon," he said in his ordinary voice.

"It doesn't seem soon to us, Herr Minister. We have been betrothed so long."

Turning the subject rapidly over in his mind, Von Tellenbach told himself that if he refused Braun's request, and took up the cause of another candidate, the engagement between the young people might be indefinitely protracted—might eventually be given up as hopeless, in which case he might hope to urge his own suit with success.

"I am sorry to disappoint the Fräulein and yourself," he said quietly; "but I am bound to remember my obligations to other friends. An old friend and neighbour, Herr Moser, is in the field; and the fact of his long acquaintance with me seems to demand my interest in his behalf."

Braun stood silent. His first sense of disappointment was very keen; but he recovered himself quickly. "In that case," he said simply, taking up his hat, and making an awkward bow, "I have only to apologize again for my intrusion."

The sight of his white face, over which flickered a forced, nervous smile, touched Von Tellenbach. "Wait a minute," he said quickly. A new and generous impulse came to him.

Braun turned and waited; his fate was trembling in the balance.

"Herr Moser's qualifications are, after all, far below your own," he said, in the tone of one judicially weighing a matter. "The Fräulein does not know what she has asked," he thought gloomily. But he would not check his impulse; he would act fairly. Emil Braun was, he had reason to believe, the worthiest candidate for the professorship, and the one most deserving of his

support. "On reflection, I will promise to speak to the Grand Duke for you," said Von Tellenbach, "and I think that I may safely predict your appointment. Please tell Fräulein Paraquin that I am glad to be able to do you this service—for her sake. And I wish you every happiness in your coming marriage."

The change which came into Braun's face was noteworthy. The colour mounted into his cheeks, a radiant look was in his eyes.

Von Tellenbach held out his hand, and the visitor took it, with half incoherent protestations of gratitude.

When Braun had gone, Von Tellenbach flung himself back in his chair, a glum expression upon his face. He had resisted the temptation to take a mean advantage of a rival; he had remembered his obligations as a gentleman, and had been fair, if not magnanimous—so far, he had no cause for regret. But he could not but recognize the fact that the triumph of his rival involved his own discomfiture. In vain he told himself that his fancy was only a fancy—that his acquaintance with the Fräulein was so slight that he should soon learn to forget her. For the time being, at least, he was dull and out of spirits.

* * * * *

The day came for the nomination of the Science Professor for the Grand Ducal College. The successful candidate was Emil Braun.

At the time of the appointment Von Tellenbach was away, on a short visit in the neighbouring country. A week passed before his return.

On the evening when he was again established in his own rooms, he noticed, as he happened to look over the way, from his window, that the shutters above the tailor's shop were unclosed, that the mignionette bore signs of having been tended, and that the room had the air of being inhabited. He remembered Herr Braun's announcement that his wedding would follow his successful appointment within a week. "Hundt has soon found another lodger," he thought. The War Minister had not exchanged a word with Fräulein Paraquin since the Baronin's dance. His avoidance of her had been intentional; under existing circumstances, there was not anything—so he told himself—to be gained by further intimacy.

The morning after his return, as Von Tellenbach was taking his morning *kaffee* and *butterbrod*, he caught sight, to his surprise, of Anna Paraquin, in her well-known costume of brown stuff dress and white straw hat, passing from the tailor's shop into the Ludwig Strasse. He stared; his coffee cup was stopped midway in its passage to his mouth. "Has the wedding been postponed?" he wondered.

When evening came he was on the look out for Anna's return. Presently he saw her in the distance; he hastened down the stairs, and met her before she reached her door.

"Good evening, Fräulein."

"Ach! der Herr Kriegsminister! How glad I am, Herr Minister, to see you at last! I have been wishing for an opportunity to thank you for your kindness to my brother."

"My kindness to your brother! What brother?"

"My brother Emil. Have you not heard that Emil has the professorship? And the Grand Duke—"

"Your brother; I don't understand, Fräulein.

The name of the gentleman for whom I interested myself was Braun."

"Yes, of course—Emil Braun. How strange that he did not tell you that he is my brother—or, at least, my step-brother. My mother was a widow when she married my father. She had one son—Emil."

Von Tellenbach looked bewildered. "He told me that he was engaged to be married."

"Yes. And he was married, yesterday. I went to Bonn for the wedding, and returned only last night."

"Who is Herr Braun's wife?" asked Von Tellenbach in a mystified tone.

"She is his cousin—our cousin, and my namesake—Anna Eisenlöflel. Anna is my greatest friend; it will be a true pleasure for me to have her as a neighbour here in Weinstadt."

"I—we—have been at cross purposes," stammered Von Tellenbach. In his impatience, during his interview with Braun, to forestall that gentleman's mention of the Fräulein's name, he had led his visitor to take for granted his knowledge of the relationship between Anna and himself. So the supposed lovers were brother and sister; and the cousin Anna to whom Braun had been betrothed was not Anna Paraquin after all!

"I'm glad, now," reflected Von Tellenbach, "that I did not enlist the Grand Duke on the side of Herr Moser."

What Von Tellenbach said next to Fräulein Paraquin does not concern us here. For one thing, he was not very intelligible. "I hope that we may soon meet again, Fräulein," he said, recovering his wandering wits, as Anna, having reached her own door, held out her hand in parting salutation.

His hope was realized. Von Tellenbach's meetings with Anna, at her brother's house and elsewhere, were frequent throughout the ensuing summer and autumn. One result of the meetings was that, in less than a year after Professor Kratzer's funeral, a wedding took place from his old professorial house—now Emil Braun's. The names of bride and bridegroom were Anna Paraquin and Heinrich von Tellenbach.

EAR-LORE.

BY LEOPOLD WAGNER.

WITH the noteworthy exception of the still-prevailing superstition of attributing good or evil gossip on the part of an absent acquaintance to a burning or tingling of the ear, the customs that were formerly connected with that member of the human body are now scarcely remembered. For example:—Cutting off the ears was, among the Romans, the common punishment of thieves, pillagers of temples, fugitives and slaves—a survival of which was to be traced in the English mode of lopping off the ears of public offenders whilst standing in the pillory down to comparatively recent times. Another Roman practice was the pulling of witnesses' ears in a court of law as a reminder of the gravity of their situation when vacillating or hesitating in their evidence. Children's ears were likewise wont

to be pulled, or soundly "boxed" by their moral and parental superiors; such a method of juvenile correction having doubtless asserted itself from the earliest times as the most effective. Allusion might also be here made to a once popular, though now obsolete, military freak, namely, the wholesale stuffing up of the ears of unoffending gentlewomen in time of war. This was essentially of Roman origin, first brought under British notice by the followers of Julius Cæsar; and thenceforth frequently perpetrated by our soldiery, particularly during the English subjugation of Wales, until it in due time gave way to less sportive and infinitely more barbaric practices. Time-honoured though these several observances may appear, they must nevertheless be regarded as modern side by side with one that carries us back to the primitive periods of Jewish history. This was the boring of the ear of every slave, who, his term of servitude having expired (six years), yet declined to claim his freedom, preferring to remain with his lord and family for an indefinite period. In such a case his master was bound to take him to the door-post, and there bore his ear through with an awl, as a sign of his voluntary attachment to that house. The context is given in the Book of Exodus xxi. 5-6:—

And if the servant shall plainly say, "I love my master, my wife and my children. I will not go free."

Then his master shall bring him unto the Judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever.

This custom was not confined to Hebrew slaves, but it soon grew to be universal in the same relation throughout the East. Indeed, many classic allusions might be quoted, showing that a bored ear was the common mark of slaves. It is referred to by Juvenal (Sat. i. 102,), and rendered by Dryden in these words:—

"First come, first served, he cries; and I, in spite
Of your great Lordships, will maintain my right:
Though born a slave, though my torn ears are bord,
'Tis not the birth, 'tis money makes the lord."

The same meaning is conveyed in a saying from Petronius, which Calmet quotes; and, again, Cicero holds up to ridicule a Libyan adventurer, who pretends he does not hear his interrogator. "It is not that your ears are not sufficiently bored," the latter exclaims in direct allusion to his having been a slave.

Descending to more modern times, we discover that biting the ear formerly constituted a peculiar mark of endearment. To this fact, Shakespeare and his contemporaries give testimony. In "Romeo and Juliet" (act 2, sc. 4), Mercutio says—

"I will bite thee by the ear for that jest;"

An illustration which finds a counterpart in one from the "Alchemist" of Ben Jonson, where (act 2, sc. 4) Mammon discharges his servant for not reciprocating his affection, though the rogue had bewitched him, and he could bite his ear. This odd mode of expressing pleasure or endearment is believed by Gifford, to quote his own words, "to be taken from the practice of animals, who, in a playful mood, bite each other's ears"—tolerably applicable in their case, we should opine, but scarcely rational when imitated by human beings fully gifted with the powers of speech, intelligence, and emotion.

From biting the ear, we come to scratching the ear, a custom just as current in a certain quarter as the former is now extinct. Few persons, probably, imagine that the ear might at any time have entered into the common courtesies of society; yet, true it is that to this day, the natives of Thibet observe, as their peculiar mode of salutation, the habit of rubbing noses and scratching the left ear-lap as often as they meet an acquaintance.

Apropos of the tingling of the ear, Sir Thomas Browne, in his "Vulgar Errors" (Book 5, p. 23), ascribes the idea to a belief in guardian angels, who touch the right ear if the conversation is favourable, and the left if scandalous to the subject of the absent gossips. Be this as it may, the superstition is very old. Even Pliny has this observation:—"When the ears do glow and tingle, some do talk of us in our absence." From time immemorial, a burning sensation in the right ear has been considered lucky, and if in the left, unlucky. In France the order is exactly reversed; whereas, in Scotland, a tingling of the ear denotes the approaching death of a friend or an enemy, according as it is the right or the left ear respectively. Notwithstanding, this last can only be regarded as a localized modification of the orthodox gossip-lore. No other significance than that contained in the words of Pliny is conveyed by the poets. Thus Herrick,

"One ear tingles, some there be
That are snarling now at me;"

and Shakespeare, in "Much Ado about Nothing" (act 3, sc. 1), refers to the same superstition, when Beatrice exclaims, "What fire is in mine ears," and asks Ursula and Hero who can be talking of her in consequence.

Still, on the subject of ear-lore, we might be tempted to dwell for some time upon a fashion, which in Shakespeare's day, and long after was largely adopted by the young gallants and beau-monde with more than a sensible notoriety. This was the wearing of a lock of hair dangling at the left ear—the "love-lock" so strenuously denounced by William Prynne in a seasonable pamphlet. Sometimes it would be plaited and decorated with a silk ribbon extending to the girdle. Claiming a distinctly French origin, the love-lock was popularly accredited with charms for causing violent love on the part of the fair sex; and so great became the infection that, later on, Charles I. could not refuse to wear it, in imitation of his courtiers. When however, the king for some reason, in 1646, cut it off, the fashion rapidly declined; and "love-locks" became a thing of the past. Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing" contains two allusions in this connection. In the first (act 3, sc. 3), Dogberry identifies a delinquent by his "lock"; and further on (act 5, sc. 1), another is described as wearing "a key in his ear and a lock hanging by it." In explanation, the "key" must have taken the place of the "flower," or other such device as was usually stuck in the ear, beside the hanging lock. Sometimes nature gave way before art, and some costly article of goldsmith's ware came to be patronized.

This brings us to the topic of ear-rings—so dear to the fair sex all the world over. According to Biblical record, such trinkets were worn by the women from the earliest times, but by men more rarely. Hebrew slaves, indeed, suffered their ears

to be bored as a figure of their optional servitude, as we have seen, but no ornament was worn in them. As to the ancients, Zenophon informs us that the males of Libya were often subjected to reproach on account of their ear-rings; and that in Greece, females alone wore such ornaments. From Egyptian specimens that have come under our notice, it would appear that only one ear-ring was wont to be worn—viz., in the left lap. In many parts of the world, trinkets for the ears form but a portion of the ordinary habiliments of the body, notably among savage life; whereas, according to Montfaucon, they were in his time worn by the men as amulets. But all such information is beside our present purpose, unless we incline to lend due interest to the belief in the boring of the ears for the cure of weak eyes. This is an old-fashioned notion, often pooh-poohed, yet as often flown to by those who are most diligent in condemning it. Many undoubted cures have been effected by it, and the wearing of gold wires; though whether the conditional bathing of the eyes with cold water may have been mostly, or perhaps wholly, conducive to the end sought, we do not take upon ourselves to vouch for. In like manner, the supposed sympathy that exists between the eye and the ear must be referred to the better understanding of our medical friends. It may be added, in regard to ear-ache, that in Gloucestershire, the common practise of pricking a snail, and pouring the exuded froth into the orifice is still deemed a most effectual operation.

Touching upon another aspect of our theme, an eminent physician has recently made the somewhat superficial discovery to the effect that a transparent ear may be accepted as indicative of an unquestionable "ear" for music. A large ear has generally been proved to satisfy this qualification. Our German neighbours invariably possess large ears to a man; and who are better-approved musicians, or more anxious to inflict their melodious strains upon the auditory organs of peaceful English citizens? Therefore, he that is blest with both large and transparent ears need in no wise fear to be classed with those who are

"Fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;"
but, discovering abundance of music within himself, should be gratified and

"Moved with concord of sweet sounds"
to the end of his days. The very opposite of this nature was Shakespeare's Cassius, of whom Cæsar says—

"He wears no music,
Seldom he smiles;"

and therefore illustrating the Italian proverb, which has it that he "Whom God loves not, that man loves not music."

Casually noting one or two phrases anent the ear often quoted, we may mention that the saying "Walls have ears" is much older than might be popularly imagined, it having been drawn from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," where it appears in this line—

"That field hath eyes, and the wood hath ears;"
as far back as the year 1524. Another, "To set people by the ears," was once a common expression as understood to set neighbours quarrelling,

'as metal pots when slung together rattle against each other.' Again, the line, "I'll send you off with a flea in your ear," is in reference to those domestic animals that are mostly annoyed by such tiny pests.

In conclusion, we might attempt to prove that the old-fashioned idea of the much-dreaded *car-wic* is little more than a fallacy; and to do this, state that the original English word *ear* signified an undeveloped flower-bud, especially among corn; and that *wic* commonly stood for a hiding-place. So that the familiar insect (formerly written *ear-wic*), through seeking its favourite dwelling beneath the closely shielded bud "ears," has been universally accredited with propensities so deadly injurious to mankind, of which it naturally stands wholly innocent. In this manner, popular superstition has often thrown a mantle of evil and dread upon surrounding objects harmless in themselves; and so long as the vulgar lend credence to ill-founded traditions, without instituting intelligent inquiry, so long must such discrepancies continue to hold sway over the public mind. So much for Ear-Lore.

The few moments she spent with Bella passed pleasantly enough with him. He went out into the little garden. He could hear Edith Heron's voice in the chamber above. He could not tell what was said, nor did he endeavour to listen. But Edith was explaining why her time must be short, promising to come the following day and make a longer stay. He turned with a smile, hearing Edith Heron's step behind him. The lowering of the eyelids—in his eyes the movement was more beautiful than the modest eyes they covered.

"I am afraid, Mr. Aylmer, I shall have to walk very fast. I promised Mrs. Pomfret to be at the Deanery not later than six o'clock." She was a little touched the moment after with the comicality of her warning to such a strong man.

"You will not distress me, I think, Miss Heron," said Aylmer, with sufficient gravity; "I shall only be too happy to accommodate my pace to yours. But it is only half-past four o'clock."

"No, but then I have so much to do."

"Lady Mary Footit and I had some conversation an hour ago," said Aylmer, with a smile. "She mentioned your engagement at the Deanery; everything is to be ready for you—there will be grown-up people there as well as children?"

"No, it is only juveniles. If I say there will only be children there—in addition to myself, the Dean's nieces will be there, they arrived this morning."

"No gentlemen?" queried Aylmer uneasily, painfully endeavouring to appear careless in asking so vital a question.

"No—" replied Edith Heron, with puzzled hesitation. "Oh, I forget again, Mr. Edward Pomfret. It is Lilian's birthday. She has not forgotten you. She did say you were so old, or she would have sent you an invitation. Would you like to see the children?"

"I should. I have an odd fancy I get on best with young children and old people. Your aunt told me I was old people's company."

"Oh, aunty says so many odd things, Mr. Aylmer; I hope you were not vexed."

"No, for I knew the truth of it. No one ought to be vexed with the truth. I am not a dragon with boys and girls, and I am quiet with old people, and not indisposed to listen and hear gossip of a past generation. I have a ridiculous idea that I have never been absolutely young, always serious, having never had time or inclination for marbles and tops—still not without some satisfaction in that life. You see, Miss Heron, I had no companions when a child."

"You are somewhat dissatisfied, but uncomplaining."

"I am. I feel as if I had missed a certain experience. But I am not dissatisfied with the life of my youth; it is my own fault if I have been such a sobersides my own generation has cut me."

He was somewhat abstracted, looking straight ahead. Edith Heron had a fine opportunity of scanning his features and forming some comprehensive estimate of his character. She had always believed this man of a fine temper and unswerving purpose. Now this opinion was confirmed fully and succinctly. There was, in the lines of his face, much for a woman to admire—candour, courage, but, above all, a fine and chivalrous regard for any one needing a firm,

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER XII.

A HAPPY RENCONTRE.

GREAT was Aylmer's surprise to behold when he had descended the crazy stairs—Edith Heron. She looked hurried, and was almost out of breath.

"Oh, Mr. Aylmer, how do you do?" exclaimed she warmly. Without any hesitation she extended her hand. It was a sudden impulse. A moment after her old timidity returned, she was a little confused, and stammered out, "Oh, how is Bella? —you can tell me, Mr. Aylmer."

"She is as well as I can expect her to be," answered he. "Indeed, I think she is something better to-day. Her good spirits keep her up." He gave Edith a quick and meaning glance.

"I can only stay a few moments," said she. "Mrs. Penman, may I see Bella? I will go up very gently. I have quite recovered myself."

"Shall I wait for you, Miss Heron?" asked Aylmer.

"Oh, Mr. Aylmer, no!" She was evidently not averse to him staying, despite her tone of remonstrance. "I may delay you in another call."

"Well, no. It is a gouty person whom I must call upon next. He can afford to wait," Aylmer muttered. "This is most kind of you," he whispered.

She had only a confused idea of his meaning. She scarcely comprehended whether he was alluding to her implied assent that he should wait for her, or her attention to Bella. She decided it to be the latter.

sustaining hand. Had he not been kind to the poor sick Bella? Who could fail to see in his eyes a tenderness, a thoughtfulness, a quick appreciation for good qualities in others, an unenvious mind, a will to advance readily any honest good work. Under his protection any woman might feel herself safe. No woman would care to grieve the heart which would beat for her and her only, for it is such men who strive to make the woman's path a path of roses. Bravely would he fight for a wife's comfort, compelling success. What a tender mouth, yet how uncompromising; his eyes were clear and blue, and bright and guileless, if she might think so. Soft they were as they rested on an imaginary picture of an harmonious life. She withdrew her eyes, for she had a surmise that compelled the colour into her cheeks. After a time she ventured to look up again, the eyes were calmly meditative, but she could imagine them, stern and pitiless, confronting guile and deceit. This time she forgot herself; he became aware of her scrutiny, but he did not intercept the glance to bring upon her dire confusion. He averted his head, ostensibly contemplating squalid children and miserable homes, so giving her time to recover herself. She was admiring the thick wavy hair, tawny, ending in crisp curls, when she became suddenly conscious that his reverie was over, that he was awake to external objects, no longer occupied with internal musing, retrospection or introspection, perhaps he was patiently waiting until she had finished her mental analysis of him. He awoke while she fell a-dreaming.

"It is a disgrace to our civilization such dwellings as these should be allowed to exist," said Aylmer without meeting her eyes; "the sanitary laws do not seem to meet the evil. I don't see how such abominations are to be grappled with. Too often the process is conducted expensively, laying heavier burdens on the people, who, I honestly believe, pay an undue proportion. One is fairly beaten in the struggle—that of making dirty people clean."

"I thought Mr. Melcombe very assiduous in his office, endeavouring to instil into people the advantages of cleanliness and pure air. I am sure the Dean thinks Mr. Melcombe a gentleman."

"He is a gentleman, but unfortunately he has not had the education for his office. I have a great regard for Melcombe personally, but I cannot say conscientiously he is the right man in the right place. He is an impoverished gentleman, and the Dean's influence secured him the office. I very much doubt whether Melcombe understands a plan, or drainage or chemistry. Surely there was an office about the Minister he might have had, and it would no doubt have been more congenial to him. I am afraid half the small towns in England have men of his calibre, men who gain their appointments through influence."

"You do not believe in influence?"

"No, I do not. It may seem strange to you to hear me say it, when my father owed his bread to obtaining his post through influence, but I have gained knowledge of many evils—but it is wearisome going into such matters."

"Oh, but I care to know such things," said Edith impulsively; "young Avery was a candidate was he not?"

"Yes, Desforges advised him to apply for it and

supported him. Now, he was the man for the post. His education had fitted him for it. He had had experience in an architect's office, he had been out superintending extensive drainage works, he came home when they were completed, his father failed through that rascal—"

"Oh yes, I remember, my aunt lost her money then."

"Young Avery thought if he came back he would be able to hold the home together; there was a large family, his father had paralysis, owing I have not a doubt to the shock, the whole of them must look to some one—he is a fine fellow, a capital fellow, and young; it was sheer stupidity passing him over. I think Tremminster is not what it was. I take an interest in all these matters, because they don't seem to lie so wide of my profession. We, the people of England, the doctors I mean, maligned as we are, have to exert ourselves to supply a clean bill of health, we do not look to the spread of disease as bringing grist to the mill—however we ought not to do," qualified he, laughing.

"Oh, if people think doctors so base, they ought to be denied them when they really are ill. It does interest me, Mr. Aylmer. These people in their squalid homes oppress me. If I took no interest in such things I should feel—I don't know whether I do not share in the moral guilt there is in allowing them to continue in such a lost state—the poor children, bred in such misery; what can we expect they will become?"

"I am sure you have a commiserating heart," said Aylmer seriously, "your promptitude calling upon Bella is convincing."

"And what of your kindness, Mr. Aylmer?" said Edith warmly, "the poor parents are full of gratitude to you."

"I only do my duty, Miss Heron, only careful, too, that it is well done."

"Oh, I have heard people talk about you," said Edith colouring slightly, and a little nervous. "Why do people form such false opinions? it is very unjust. But it is a title of honour to be called 'the poor people's doctor,' and there are people who pass you on with that. I always felt it was good of you to earn such a title; sometimes I almost wished I were able to tell you that—that I sympathised with you."

"My dear Miss Heron," returned Aylmer, touched, but most careful not to cover her with confusion, "if I have done even more than my duty, your regard rewards me most abundantly."

Had she overstepped the mark there is in the feminine code of prudence? She was almost afraid she had.

"Perhaps you think it bold of me," said she, not daring to meet his eyes, "to—to speak to you thus?"

"No, I do not think it bold; oh dear, no," declared he with a ring in his voice. "How much happier people would be if there was less reserve. It has made me much happier to learn that I do not stand in a false light with every one. Perhaps you will pardon me if I tell you, Miss Heron, what has—why I may say troubled me for a long time, that you and I have lived so long in this town, and have not exchanged a word until quite recently."

She moved her head aside. She could scarcely conceal the happiness this confession gave her.

"We have not met much," said she. "You

and I go out very little. We might have met, but you do not go into society, nor do I." She was most disconnected, but it bridged over what might have been a break, an awkward pause.

"No doubt I have myself to blame," said Aylmer. "I have fought shy of people, people have fought shy of me, and I am rebel born. I might have taken pains to be more sociable."

"But those sociable people waste a great portion of their lives."

"I don't know," said Aylmer, dubiously. "I don't know which is most to be condemned—sociableness if it does go with indolence, or hermit-like severity of life. But now, Miss Aylmer, that I have proceeded thus far in acquaintance, may I be bold? Bold to commit myself in wishing, if it be possible, to be of service to you."

"Oh, Mr. Aylmer, I do not think I want for anything," returned she with some surprise.

"You are, then, rich. It was Richard Devensley who gave me the hint—you like a good book. Are you full of reading at the present moment?"

"Mr. Aylmer, you anticipate my wants," laughed she.

"Then I may send you a parcel of books?"

"I cannot decline such a kind offer," admitted she.

"There is one book I have just read," said Aylmer. "It is a translation—I do not pretend to read in the original—a book of Paul Heyse's—a number of short stories. Will you read the last one?" asked he, with a smile.

"I will read it first if you like."

"Thank you."

They reached the western front of the cathedral. Aylmer was not surprised to see Cicely Devensley in Mr. Pulsford's company. They were passing through the iron gates unto the Green. Aylmer observed his own companion, but could not detect the slightest ruffling of her composure. Cicely saw them and stopped. As if on second thoughts she moved on a pace or two, as if unconscious of their approach; then either her conscience or her shrewdness dictated to her that she had better stop again. She crossed the grass and came to the palisades, Mr. Pulsford following her slowly, and appearing somewhat confused and backward. Both were so guilty under their assumption of nonchalance that Aylmer with difficulty restrained a laugh. He had a more tolerant eye for Mr. Pulsford now.

"How do you do, Mr. Aylmer?" said Cicely in her best manner, the most innocent archness in her eyes. "Edith, you, I suppose, will be at the Deanery to-night. It is too much of them to expect you to be there; the servants might do for all that sort of thing. I should not care for it—children are so troublesome."

"No, Cicely, not troublesome. I am sure I have been looking forward to this evening with some pleasure."

"Do you go, Mr. Aylmer?" asked Cicely, with half-closed jealous eyes.

"No," returned Aylmer, bluntly.

"Oh," said Cicely, quickly, "I thought you both were coming from the Dean's."

"No," said Aylmer, with unsparing voice; "Miss Heron had gone out of her way considerably to visit a poor consumptive girl. We met there."

"Oh, I see," said Cicely, with a shrug of her

shoulders. The subject was scarcely cheerful enough for her. It was not incumbent upon ladies to utilize their spare hours graduating as visitors of the sick. "I am going to the organ," Cicely volunteered. "Mr. Pulsford has promised to give me half-an-hour."

Aylmer began to wonder if this *distract* fellow would ever speak. He had not had a word for Edith Heron, but all the time looked furtively at her, as if detected in some glaring treason, or on the road to it. Aylmer fancied his companion was a little ashamed of Mr. Pulsford. Really Edith was biting her lip to restrain a tendency to laugh; the organist did not show to advantage even in her eyes. The bearish Mr. Aylmer had considerably more aplomb than Mr. Pulsford. Was she to be jealous of Cicely? Cicely's desire to be *au fait* at the organ was not in itself a cause for jealousy. It certainly seemed to be a new and absorbing whim of her friend's. Still there was a little feeling of pique in Edith's breast; she would scarcely have been a woman had she been without such a feeling. Edith felt at the time that if she had really cared for Mr. Pulsford she must have resented Cicely's conduct. How, if she were to go up boldly and take Mr. Pulsford away from Cicely? Cicely was stealing him or attempting to do so. Cicely was a spider and Mr. Pulsford was having Cicely's threads spun about him whether he liked it or not. These thoughts only made her think how ludicrous was the situation; how foolish they all were; each perhaps playing a false part.

"Ah," thought she, "if Mr. Pulsford is fonder of Cicely than of me, I shall only be too happy to release him. Better this now than go further, and trouble and vexation to ensue, if nothing worse."

"Now, Mr. Pulsford," said Cicely, authoritatively, "we must go, or I shall have no time at the organ. Mr. Pulsford was good enough to hurry down to our house after service was over. And Edith, you will be late at the Dean's if we keep you gossiping here. They will not expect you to-morrow, will they? I shall come down and see how you are."

Cicely moved away briskly; Mr. Pulsford raising his hat, stammering an adieu, hurriedly following in Cicely's wake.

"Cicely has now a devouring passion for the organ, there is no resisting her; you see, Mr. Aylmer, how she has enlisted Mr. Pulsford."

Aylmer was half inclined to think Edith Heron was piqued.

"Really, when Cicely does take anything into her head, no half measures go down with her," continued Edith. "Amateur theatricals were engrossing her attention a week or two back. I wonder if that is shelved? I am not sorry if it is."

Edith laughed, and Aylmer saw she was not troubled about Cicely Devensley and Mr. Pulsford.

"No, I think it will not have gone out of her head," said Aylmer, with mischievous meaning and a smile, suggesting that it was to the Devensleys' interest it should go on. It was well known that although the family were remarkable for their integrity and solvency, they were, with the exception of Dick, considered a little mercenary, having always an eye for the main chance.

"Cicely's brother is away," continued Aylmer; "when he returns home, her fever will gain strength. I think she depends a good deal upon Dick."

"Yes," said Edith, a little absently, looking at her watch; "how Cicely has delayed me. I am afraid my poor aunt will think me lost. She will scold me."

"Perhaps I shall be a party to the offence?"

"No, I cannot bring you in blameworthy. It is my own fault. The children will think me long in coming."

"Will Mr. Pulsford be there?" asked Aylmer, abruptly.

"No——" replied she, a little surprised at the question; "at least, I am not aware that he will be there. Mrs. Pomfret never mentioned it to me. The Dean was averse to any grown-up people coming. He says if young men and women wish to come to his house, he will have a special gathering for them; he says grown-up people are so selfish when they come to a children's party, they always end by ousting the children from the ground."

Aylmer laughed, a little ashamed of his curiosity. Edith was somewhat taken off her guard. She had not seen in his question his jealous fear of the obnoxious Pulsford being there, the satisfaction that would accrue to him hearing her declare the organist would be absent. Later, it came to her, the full meaning of his few blunt words.

"I wondered," said Aylmer, with stammering mendacity, "if you were going, whom you would have as escort home."

"Mr. Edward Pomfret would see me home—but it is ridiculous. Home is not so far distant, and I am not afraid. I have come away from the Deanery as late before and alone; generally I meet not a soul."

"I have to pay my last visit to a patient late at night," said Aylmer, hesitatingly, "I shall pass the Deanery perhaps about the hour you are leaving; if so, I might accompany you homeward."

What a fabrication for a conscientious-minded man! Edith Heron was scarcely so simple as he imagined her to be. She could not quite believe his patient required such late attention.

"Mr. Aylmer, you must not take the trouble. I am scarcely certain of the hour. Ten o'clock it may be, perhaps twelve. I shall get away early, if I can. I—really—I cannot expect you—" she broke down fairly. She could not meet his effrontery with sufficient indignation or determination. "I am much obliged to you though," said she, with a blush, "for giving me a thought."

For a moment Aylmer was suspicious enough to believe she depended upon Pulsford lying in ambush for her. But no, it scarcely sounded like that, mentioning young Pomfret as her escort if she needed one. If she expected Pulsford being in the vicinity of the Deanery at that hour, she would have said at once that there would be some one to escort her home. She might not mention his name, but of course Aylmer would understand.

"Will you come in?" asked Edith, at Lady Mary's door; "my aunt will be pleased to see you."

"No, thanks," replied Aylmer with a laugh, remembering the old lady's bluff candour, "you will be busy; Lady Mary, no doubt, is busy. I think I am much better out of your way. I will not delay any one of you a single moment; so I will say good day, Miss Heron."

She extended her hand. It was quite a ray of hope for him. He held it perhaps a moment longer

than social convenances warranted, looking into her eyes, the laughing line from his mouth somewhat deepened. Her eyes were lit up with some bright inward thought, and still the lips were closed, as if guarding jealously the secrets of her soul. She did not speak; there was nothing for him but to relinquish her hand, raise his hat and bow slightly as she inclined her head graciously. The sound of the door closing had to him, however, a less ominous sound than heretofore. It had closed gently, as if she would fain have had him enter. So went the colour of it all to his heart, giving him some assurance of more fortunate days. Dream on, dreamer, build castles. With such inspiration a duller fellow than Tom Aylmer would raise about him *Chateaux en Espagne*.

(To be continued.)

RONDELS OF CHILDHOOD.

BY BERNARD WELLER.

I. WHEN CLARICE DIED.

WHEN Clarice died and they stole up to me,
To tell me of her end, I only sighed,
Like those who hunger mutely not to be,
When Clarice died.
She was my playmate, bright and merry-eyed,
With curls, long curls so beautiful to see;
My little sweetheart and my little bride.
When Clarice died, I crept all noiselessly
Down the lone lane where she was wont to hide.
And cast myself beneath her favourite tree,
When Clarice died.

STRANGE EXPERIMENTS.—It may be interesting to our readers to hear about the action produced by different coloured rays of solar light on the development and growth of mammals. A continental professor has lately undertaken numerous observations on newly-born puppies. The results which he obtained are highly interesting, and are as follows:—1. All the colours of the solar spectrum act favourably on the development and growth of mammals, though not in an identical degree. 2. The action of coloured rays is proportionate to the degree of their intensity in the spectrum. 3. White light, in its effect on development, stands lower than the brighter coloured rays of the spectrum. 4. The coloured lights, in their influence on development, may be arranged in the following decreasing order—red, orange, green, white, blue, and violet. Dr. Horbacewicz draws attention to a striking difference in the individual character of puppies according to the colour of light in which they lived and grew. Thus "green" puppies presented extreme liveliness, cheerfulness, and playfulness, accompanied by ease and gracefulness of movements; in addition, they were invariably good-humoured and kind. "Orange" puppies were also prone to play, but their movements were heavy and awkward, and their temper was rather cross—they fought each other on the least provocation—and stubborn. "Violet" and "blue" puppies were of a quiet, almost apathetic disposition, the "blue" especially so, since they never played. "Violet" showed a curious fondness for barking. "Red" puppies also did not manifest any liveliness.

H.

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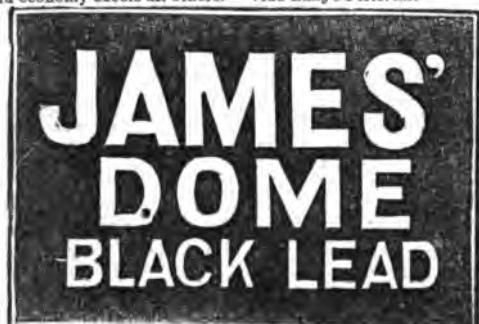
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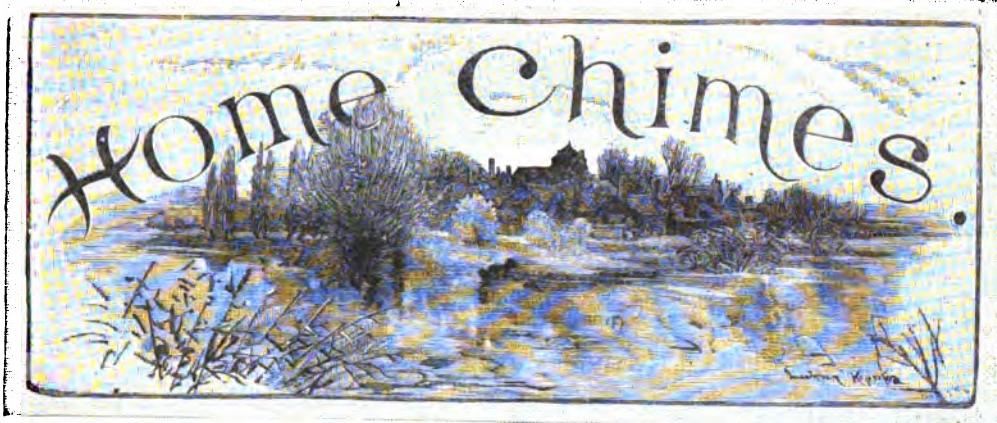
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LONDON: DECEMBER 5, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

JULIUS CAESAR'S STATUE.

BY EDEN PHILPOTT.

CHAPTER I.

THERE can be no doubt in the minds of those who have visited Mudbrook that this busy little town is the ugliest spot in England; everything here is unsightly and commonplace. Anything more utterly insignificant than the streets, and anything more trying to all one's better feelings than the alternate lengths of area railing and petty shop-front, it would be impossible to imagine.

Mudbrook stands near the mouth of a big river, and might therefore be supposed to enjoy some of the natural advantages of a sea boarder; nothing, however, is gained by this arrangement from an artistic point of view. It would be safe, doubtless, to assume that the tide does rise here from time to time, but the chance spectator who ever observes anything beyond long stretches of gruesome mud with one narrow channel of foul tar-stained fluid winding in the midst is fortunate indeed. Pilots are the most important members of the Mudbrook community, and their dingy vessels when not at work cluster together about the quay or repose ungracefully on the aforesaid mudflats. The cockle trade is no mean industry either, while even the Mudbrook shrimp at certain seasons possesses a value far above the shrimp of less favoured districts.

Mr. Silas Joskyn was, at the time of this narrative, the municipal head of Mudbrook and showed his power to the entire neighbourhood, one fine morning by suddenly calling an "extraordinary" meeting of the Local Board. There were not wanting some who insinuated that any convention of the Mudbrook government would merit the long adjective, but as we must now listen for a short while to Mr. Joskyn and his colleagues, we can form our own opinions without prejudice. Notwithstanding the fact that twenty-four hours

only of notice had been given them, each member of the council was in his place at the appointed time, and excitement appeared on every face as the Mayor, who himself took the chair, rose to address his supporters.

Mr. Joskyn was a minute man, with high forehead and firm little mouth, which opened so slightly when he spoke that strangers often fancied he was trying to ventriloquize. But though his style was subdued the Mayor's eloquence never failed to impress all hearers. On this occasion his speech occupied some twenty minutes, and ended with the following words, which sum up the whole object of the assembly:—

"Mudbrook is a rising town, gentlemen, but, I may say, a painfully ugly one. [Hear, hear; no, no; yes, and order.] Do not be annoyed, gentlemen; it is no fault of ours. But I venture to maintain that blame will attach to us if such a state of things is allowed to continue. Our town increases in wealth daily; and is it to increase daily in hideousness as well? No! gentlemen; emphatically, no! I appeal to you all to rise as one man and bring Beauty, with a capital B, gentlemen, into our town. In addition to riches and prosperity, let us have Beauty in Mudbrook. Two days ago I came upon yet another row of miserable little mansions in course of construction. They were absolutely more frightful than anything I have yet seen; and driven, as it were, to desperation I resolved to summon you all without loss of time, put this growing evil into words, and ask your advice in the matter."

Applause followed the Mayor's speech, and was only silenced when Alderman Giles, the wet blanket of the company, and one always ready with objections to meet any would-be reformers, asked in what manner it was, humanly speaking, possible to beautify Mudbrook.

"That is the question we are here to answer," coldly responded the Mayor; and upon this all set their wits to work.

Alderman Bunny, who had lately returned from a week's gaiety in London, was the first to make a suggestion.

"I think a handsome restaurant, with palms and statues and a bar, would combine art and beauty, and barmaids and—" (Order, order!)

A dozen pair of outraged eyes blazed upon the wretched Bunny—a little pink-and-white man with sand-coloured hair—and he, conscious of having placed his foot in it rather deeply, relapsed into a flustered and miserable picture of uneasy alarm.

Alderman Green, a bootmaker, struck while the iron was hot.

"I was about to put a museum before the Board," he remarked, as if that "combination of instruction and amusement" was in his waistcoat pocket, and only wanted finger and thumb to make it visible.

Alderman Jones, also a bootmaker, and Green's successful rival, promptly capped the last notion.

"I say a hospital for the poor's the thing. Have what flim-flumgeries of brick and mortar ye like, but let the affair be some good to somebody."

"Well, now, my idea is a building after the nature of the Mansion House in the metropolis, with pillars in front," advanced Alderman Gregson, the toady of the party. He was rewarded with a smile from Mr. Joskyn.

Everybody now began to talk at once, and the proposed buildings rapidly increased in size and splendour until Alderman Bunny plucked up courage to speak again, and meekly murmured something about a cathedral and a bishop, thereby instantly regaining the goodwill of all present. There followed a pause after this last suggestion. It was felt human ingenuity could hardly go further, and the meeting looked towards its chief. That gentleman, who had been trying to make himself heard for some little time, now hastily explained that the funds necessary for the production of the beautiful in Mudbrook would be limited, and that even with the public subscription list he purposed to set on foot, four or five hundred pounds would be the utmost they could hope to have at their disposal.

This entirely altered the field of choice, and innumerable singular and undesirable objects were now mentioned.

Ornamental lamp-posts, electric lights, a town clock, a tramway, avenues of small trees, a flagstaff, a drinking fountain, and a railway arch were among the best and worst suggestions, each in turn being fired off like a cracker by one or another of the inventive gathering.

None were generally approved, however, until Alderman Ball, a pilot who had not yet spoken, suddenly roared out in his well-known bass notes, "Why not 'ave a statoo?"

"A statue?" said the Mayor, "a statue! What a capital idea!"

Thunders of applause followed Mr. Joskyn's remark, and Ball, a very large man, chiefly remarkable for modesty, was urged to rise and elaborate his most happy inspiration.

"Gents all," he began, grinning nervously, "I am not much given to addressing of you, but I now rise to thank you for the honour you 'ave done me. I must say—that is, I will say—as 'ow I'm most 'appy to 'ave 'it on any notion what meets the feelings of all gents' ere present, and I will now conclude by 'oping this reaches you as it leaves—"

Mr Ball, suddenly conscious that he was being

listened to with attention, and keenly aware in the same moment he had begun to work into his oration certain useful manners of speaking, which, to say the least, would be out of place, sat down abruptly without having advanced the business in hand to any appreciable extent.

He was applauded for his maiden speech notwithstanding, and, a statue being unanimously agreed upon, there only remained the question of what illustrious personage should grace the town of Mudbrook with his marble or bronze presence.

The toady spoke first, and opined that no fitter celebrity than Mr. Joskyn himself could be selected.

The Mayor ignored this suggestion.

"Our hero must be sought in the ranks of royal persons," he said.

"Royal pussons!" burst out Alderman Jones, to whom such beings were as red rags to a bull. "What do you want with Royal pussons?"

The question was put, and finding himself in a minority of one, the disgusted bootmaker withdrew abruptly.

Upon this, after the Mayor had decreed that "nobody more modern than Queen Anne" should be deemed eligible, Alderman Green, who did not fail to show joy at the departure of his rival, was called upon.

Green had somehow acquired reputation as being a profound student of books. No one disputed his right to be termed scholar of the party, and when Mr. Joskyn, therefore, hoped he would discuss the relative merits of England's by-gone sovereigns, all felt it was a comfortable and pleasing thing to have done, and all were also confident that the task could not be trusted to better hands.

"Gentlemen and Mr. Mayor," began the man of learning, "though unprepared at so short a notice to deliver anything approaching a lecture on English History, I will still endeavour to put before you the chief specialities—if I may be allowed the word—among our British kings and queens, beginning with William the Conqueror."

The Board settled itself comfortably.

"Of William I. himself," continued Green, "I will only say that he is quite unsuited to our requirements from every point of view. We must also reject several others, but we shall do well, I think, firstly to examine the claims of the Henrys to our notice—I say the Henrys."

There was some applause, but the meeting appeared to know nothing whatever about "the Henrys," singly or collectively; so the speaker proceeded—

"The first, second, third, and fourth Henrys were straightforward, worthy monarchs for those days, but not heroic. In Henry V., however, we have a very high-class sovereign indeed. He slew more foreigners of different countries than any other English king. Henry VIII. married from nine to twelve wives, and did much general good besides. Henry VI. and VII. were fairly reliable men, but both died violent deaths, owing to want of tact."

But the Henrys in a body utterly failed to meet the reception they deserved, and Mr. Green had to try other ground.

"Richard 'Cur-de-Leeong,' which is French," went on the historian, "was celebrated for his

crusades. This king was perhaps a trifle too bloodthirsty if anything. Then we have—to come suddenly to more modern times—Charles I., James I., and others."

There was no enthusiasm or even pleasure exhibited over any of these "specialities," and somebody asked what could be said in favour of King Alfred.

"Of Alfred, surnamed, 'The Great,' very little is known," answered Green, glibly; and certainly very little indeed was known by him.

He continued to speak freely, however, dwelling at length on a misunderstanding connected with burned cakes.

Upon this, Alderman Gregson, who dismally failed to catch the magnificent wild spirit of those times, remarked that it was disgraceful to think of royalty demeaning itself thus, or, as he put it, "a king spending his valuable time cooking buns."

This was conclusive, as no one had a good word for King Alfred after Gregson finished his criticism.

Several more sovereigns were selected and mentioned by the bootmaker, but none gave any satisfaction; and finally, disheartened, breathless, and quite at the end of his historical tether, Mr. Green resumed his seat.

"What about the ladies?" asked Alderman Bunny, with questionable judgment, seeing how one of his unseemly remarks had already offended. But no attention was paid him, and Alderman Green answered in a dreary tone that there were only Queen Elizabeth and Joan of Arc, adding that, as one did nothing beyond settling the Armada, and the other was not an Englishwoman or even a lady by birth, there remained really very little more to be said of them.

Then followed a pause, during which each member of the Board looked frowningly at nothing, scratched his chin or his ear, and endeavoured to strike on a new subject.

"Julius Saysir!"

Mr. Ball had once more come to the rescue, but the Mayor felt doubts as to whether the last-named great one might be considered wholly respectable.

"Julius Cæsar?" he echoed, demurrringly; "a man of renown, certainly, but a heathen, I believe." ..

However, Cæsar took popular fancy from the first. There were positive cheers and renewed shouts for Alderman Ball, who, seeing the general feeling in his favour, was about to get on his legs again. But Mr. Joskyn feared the worthy pilot's speeches, and having at the same time a dim notion that Mr. Ball's knowledge of Julius Cæsar was probably a minus quantity, he discreetly hoped that "his good friend, Green," would kindly furnish any particulars with which he might be acquainted, to the advantage of the last-named illustrious character.

Alderman Green's strong point was, of course, the Henrys; he knew no more of Cæsar than of King Alfred or Confucius; but his reputation was at stake, so, pulling himself together, and speaking with authority, he began: "Cæsar was a man of enormous mind—"

"Could you give us any notion of his personal appearance?" interrupted Mr. Joskyn, who wished the statue to be as effective as was possible.

"Oh! as a mere man," exclaimed Mr. Green,

with relief, "our hero presents a splendid figure in history. Of immense size and strength, the very sight of his terrific two-handled sword—which he always carried with him—struck terror to the hearts of his foes and made them compare him to the great Hercules, who, singularly enough, was a very distant relative!"

These words, with the last happy touch, gave general delight. There were more cheers, and the orator continued:

"Cæsar, after subduing the entire world, finally determined to visit England. He did so, and it is possible, nay more, probable, that the town of Mudbrook was the place he selected!"

Here ensued a short and joyful uproar, with mutual congratulations all round.

"The English of those days were a rude and ignorant race, but Cæsar proved the saving of them, as one may say. He built what are called Roman villas—some are still standing—and taught the natives to wear clothes, an art which, I blush to say, was not known to them."

This pleasant conversational style of imparting knowledge appeared popular, but Mr. Joskyn now made a mental note that the Board, though in a very good humour, was beginning to get both tired and hungry.

At Mr. Green's next fullstop, therefore, the Mayor rose, thanked that gentleman sincerely for the many stray crumbs of historical fact he had so generously scattered before the meeting, and then begged that all those in favour of a statue to Julius Cæsar would hold up their hands. Everybody raised both hands, and Rome's hero, in conjunction with Messrs. Joskyn, Ball and Green, received a hearty and honest ovation. Votes of thanks were passed in all directions, and the proceedings terminated.

"It's a small beginning," said the Mayor, as the gathering broke up, "but it is a beginning, and may lead to more important results."

The subscription list was opened forthwith, and that very evening Mr. Joskyn indited an elaborate epistle to Frank Chiselle, Esq., A., the rising young sculptor, commissioning him to execute, for the town of Mudbrook, a marble statue of Julius Cæsar, and ending his instructions with a desire that the artist would not overlook a certain enormous double-handled sword, "which weapon, I am informed, Cæsar generally carried with him."

CHAPTER II.

CONSIDERING his extreme youth, the reputation Alderman Jones's eldest son Oliver had acquired in Mudbrook was little short of marvellous. There are some boys who seem to have been brought into the world for no object whatever, beyond the torturing and tormenting of their fellow-creatures. Of this class in its highest possible development young Jones was a specimen. He had made a mark in his own family circle, even before his mother-tongue was familiar to him, but at the age of fourteen, about which period we make his acquaintance, all elementary forms in the great art of practical joking were laid aside, and Mudbrook acknowledged in Oliver a past master of subtle and uncomfortable combinations, always produced with a harrowing amount of skill and foresight worthy of some much better cause.

On its becoming generally known, therefore, that the bootmaker intended sending his eldest hope to a boarding school after the coming Christmas, there floated through the Mudbrook mind a quiet joyous sensation of relief.

But five coming weeks of holiday appeared a grave matter in any case, and Mudbrook was fully alive to the fact that great things could be accomplished before the end of that period.

After much deep thought, young Oliver had determined that the said weeks of relaxation should be devoted to some really considerable undertaking likely to keep his memory green in the heart of his native town, and stamp him for ever as a lad of more than ordinary power. Christmas was far off as yet, however.

"Why, Jacob!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones, at seeing her husband return home on the morning of Mr. Joskyn's meeting, "what's brought you back so quick?"

"It ain't over yet," growled the alderman; "I left 'em in the midst of it. We're going to have a statue—good notion too—but they must all begin a-chattering of royalty, so I walked out."

"Why not some king or queen, father?" inquired Oliver, who had just come in from school. He was a small boy, and about as ugly and uninteresting in appearance as all other boys of fourteen.

"Why not a king?" asked Mr. Jones, looking at his son fiercely, and holding up the finger of reproof. "What's the good of kings or queens? That's what all your book learning won't tell you. Where's the good of 'em? It's not kings nor queens, nor *dooks* neither, what's made England. Never! Providence turns 'em out royal pussions, and such, but do she ever give 'em a set of brains to match their lofty stations? Never."

After which magnificent tirade Alderman Jones went to his dinner.

A month slipped by; it now wanted but another to Christmas. This gap in our story may be satisfactorily filled by the following few lines from the *Mudbrook Intelligencer*—a local sheet of no importance whatever:—

"We are informed," remarked the *Intelligencer*, "that Mr. Chiselle, the eminent sculptor, and Associate of the Royal Academy of London, has made much progress with his magnificent marble statue of Julius Caesar, destined to adorn our town. Mr. Chiselle hopes to complete his masterpiece in about three weeks' time. The ceremony of unveiling is fixed for December 26th, Boxing Day."

Mr. Joskyn had thrown himself heart and soul into this business. For the past month Julius Caesar's statue occupied his entire attention. The selection of a site was his first care, and afterwards the subscription list and arrangements for an imposing "unveiling" kept him fully employed.

A spot just without the town seemed the most fitting to all interested in the question. In the first place, this site would overlook the sea, or what did duty for that body of water; and in the second, being near a road by which foot travellers entered Mudbrook, the statue might create a favourable impression, and possibly blind critical eyes to other things. This last was Alderman Gregson's idea; but as no one beyond an occasional vagrant ever dreamed of entering Mudbrook by road, such an advantage appeared, perhaps, minimised in value. At any rate, an open space about the

selected spot was carefully boarded off by a lofty hoarding, within which workmen who came from London, and made themselves thoroughly objectionable in consequence, were now erecting a massive granite pedestal.

Oliver Jones and his bosom friend, Alderman Green's son John, spent much of their spare time in the neighbourhood of this charmed spot, and managed to get on wonderfully intimate terms with the stiff-necked and superior London artificers.

There was a palpable blankness of mind about Mr. Green's boy which made this youth of the greatest possible assistance to his more astute chum. A certain air of amazed innocence sat well on the open and expressionless face of the historian's son; and this gift, as had been proved in cases of detection at the wrong moment, could not be sufficiently valued.

But to return to the authorities. Mr. Joskyn had, once in his life, seen a Lord Mayor's show, and that incoherent pageant impressed itself vividly upon his mind.

From a financial standpoint, however, military bands and men in armour were out of the question, and when all debts immediately connected with the statue itself were cleared off, there would be a very small balance indeed for any public spectacle of importance.

"After all," said Mr. Joskyn, upon this subject, "if we had anything very much out of the common there might be some unpleasantness. Thousands of holiday people from up the river will be here, of course."

By "up the river" he referred to the mercantile port farther inland, to which the argosies of all nations were escorted, day and night, by the pilots of Mudbrook.

"There's the fire engine, at any rate," Alderman Ball reminded his chief. Mr. Joskyn allowed that this ancient apparatus would certainly add tone to his contemplated display.

It was finally arranged that the local band should be augmented by the musicians from Rockford, a neighbouring colony; that the Freemasons and Foresters should march in solemn state; that the school children should all be washed the night before, and, drawn up in a body at the foot of the statue, should sing a song of rejoicing, written expressly for the occasion by Alderman Green. Lastly, and best of all, the Earl of Mudshire would himself perform the ceremony, and deliver one of those speeches for which he was justly famed throughout the confines of his own especial county.

A hobby for public speaking and lecturing, upon every imaginable subject, at every imaginable opportunity, was kept in regular exercise by this fine old Englishman. During the winter months he spent his time in trotting industriously over the face of the country and giving his quaint old-world views of men and manners to audiences for the most part small and unappreciative. Visions of a magnificent oration on Roman history generally and Julius Caesar in particular crowded before the mind's eye of this aristocratic entertainer; and though, as he reminded Mr. Joskyn, who had made bold to call in person, his last lecture in Mudbrook, on the generally interesting subject of "The lost glories of our Indian Empire," had commanded neither a very numerous nor attentive auditory, he, nevertheless,

declared his willingness to "oblige again," and definitely undertook the grave duties thrust upon him.

Soon after this interview, and a few days before Christmas, a large crowd assembled at the railway station and accorded to Julius Cæsar such a welcome as is seldom seen. He arrived in a somewhat undignified manner by night luggage train, but hearty cheers greeted the huge packing-case nevertheless, and Mr. Joskyn, feeling this to be one of the greatest moments at present recorded in the Mudbrookian records, had a vague notion that a deputation with an address written on parchment, or something of that kind, should have been ready to receive the statue. In fact, the Mayor became quite maudlin, not to say idolatrous, over Julius Cæsar, and, though it was late, insisted on having the noble Roman conveyed to his future resting-place there and then, with the aid of four stout horses and a furniture van.

Getting the statue out of its straw bed and on to its pedestal proved a long and difficult operation. Crowds of roughs and loafers gathered themselves around the hoarding next day, and their speculations upon the object and reason of the entire business were not without interest, as showing the spirit in which a large proportion of Mudbrook's citizens viewed these first steps towards art applied to public decoration in their town.

"Who was this 'ere 'Judis Scissors?'" asked one hulking giant, taking a pipe out of his mouth for the purpose.

"That aint 'is name, yer igit!" answered another.

"Julus Skescer's the name, and there never weren't such a bloke really. He was only a him-age what them 'eathen coves said their prayers to."

"Why, you knows all about it, Billy!" exclaimed a third listener.

"Ah, Billy's a clever 'un!"

"'Ave a glass of something, Billy?"

"Let all 'ave something!"

"Four 'alf? Toss yer. 'Eads it is!"

"Blow ole Squeez'r!"

And amidst a Babel of such remarks Billy and his friends adjourned, their places being taken by others like unto them.

Mr. Chiselle, though he confessed to his private friends that his "Cæsar" was a "pot-boiling piece of work," had managed, notwithstanding, to gauge the Mudbrook taste in statuary with great skill. To the eyes of those favoured ones who attended Mr. Joskyn's private view, the huge martial figure in all an ancient Roman's striking, if scanty, garb of war was perfection.

Alderman Ball, one who liked as much of anything as he could get for his money, declared that this statue was the largest, and therefore the best he had ever seen in his life.

Alderman Gregson said in the Mayor's hearing that he detected a strong and startling likeness between the stern white face above them and Mr. Joskyn's features. "The chins are absolutely exact," he remarked. But seeing that Cæsar's was pre-Raphaelite, and the other celebrity owned to the dumpiest of double chins imaginable, the abject Gregson might have mended his instance on this occasion and abstained for once from making an idiot of himself.

Alderman Green was, so he said, in a position to

prove the statue fulfilled all requirements of historical research, a fact which more than ever confirmed Mr. Joskyn in his original opinion that Cæsar belonged to a dark and heathen age.

But, though regretting the artist had not supplied his imposing work with a somewhat fuller wardrobe, the Mayor, all things considered, had every reason to be well satisfied in the visible result of his labours, and now looked forward eagerly to the approaching festival.

Christmas Eve came, and with it all final preparations for the great event. The school children rehearsed their poem for the last time; Scrubbington, the band-master, for the last time, tottered on the brink of insanity over the efforts of his combined performers; the Freemasons and Foresters gave final touches to their banners and gorgeous insignia; while as for the Mayor himself, after his exertions on that busy day, it is idle to declare a man cannot be in two or even three different places at one and the same moment. Twenty-four hours sped by, then Christmas night closed in wildly and roughly. A cold wind whistled over Mudbrook, and with it the waves—the tide was absolutely high for once—sang a dismal duet, while a waning moon, visible at times through fast-flying clouds, gave barely sufficient light to define the central point of a depressing scene. This was the statue. All hoardings, scaffold poles, and other outside aids to the erection of Julius Cæsar, had been finally removed, and now in the darkness nothing remained but a vague, shadowy monster, draped in white canvas, which fluttered around it like the wings of some giant bird. A mighty, ill-shaped spirit of the storm, preparing for flight, the great figure seemed to be. Beneath walked two policemen—up and down, up and down, their measured tread contrasting strangely with the varied sounds of the gale. Tramp, tramp, tramp, they went, walking together, talking but seldom, and, at intervals, throwing bright circles of light from their lanterns on to the rustling white folds above them. Both seemed moved in some way by the weird strangeness of their charge, both felt from time to time for their revolvers, and neither, it was evident, would be regretful when dim dawn should glimmer over the distant sea line and their watch be ended.

But several curious and unaccountable events happened before day, and now these two hardy limbs of the law entered upon what proved to be one of the most exciting half-hours in their lives. The night was at its worst. The apology for a moon had set, and small driving rain filled the black air, when a sudden wild, blood-curdling shriek startled our watchers. It was no distant steamer signalling the pilots, no cry of the storm, but a human voice—a ghastly, half-choked yell—amply justifying exclamations of horror and alarm from its hearers.

"Good heavens, Joe, somebody's being murdered!" cried one.

"Thank our stars we was up here to-night," earnestly answered his companion, and then, forgetting their trust and everything else but the cry still ringing in their ears, both men started as fast as their legs would carry them towards the shelving edge of the cliff from which the sound had proceeded. So reely had they disappeared when from behind unfinished buildings, not far distant, there flitted a black, imp-like little figure

bearing a light. It moved quickly to the base of the deserted statue, climbed its pedestal and then crawled under its flowing draperies. The light vanished, but shone out again some few seconds later near the summit of the statue and there remained burning steadily.

Both policemen were by this time at the water's edge searching fruitlessly for any traces of a crime. Twice again they heard the cry, once so close to them that both nearly fell into the dark waves below, and again only fainter and much further off. A long wild-goose chase followed, and at length, mystified and baffled, the constables returned to their beat without any result whatever from their adventure.

"It's some poor soul what's drowned hisself, I reckon," said the younger man, breathing hard and walking closer to his companion than was absolutely necessary.

"It weren't no human voice at all," answered the other gruffly. "I wish we 'adn't gone and left this confounded stater."

All was as the preservers of peace had left it with Julius Cæsar. A certain light had disappeared, and the heavy canvas bellied out on every side as before, crackling strangely in the dismal wind.

Towards Mudbrook High Street there sped about this time two small and wild-looking youths with a lantern, and something in a black bag. One of these ultimately sneaked through an open back window in Alderman Jones's dwelling-house, and the other, keeping to a narrow unlighted lane, suddenly vanished not far from the shop of one, Alderman Green, already mentioned in this narrative.

CHAPTER III.

FORTUNATELY for the coming ceremony, dawn brought vast improvement in the weather, and by ten o'clock, at which hour the Earl of Mudshire's train was due at Mudbrook, the sun made itself visible, and there seemed every chance of a fine day.

Early excursion trains carried large numbers of holiday folk from the neighbouring port into our little town, and when the great man of the occasion absolutely arrived and was greeted on the platform of Mudbrook station by the Mayor and Aldermen, a thousand persons, at least, sent up noisy cheers without, and prepared to accompany the procession which immediately started to Julius Cæsar's statue.

Mr. Joskyn and his illustrious friend, in an open carriage drawn by four horses, led the way, escorted by a company of no less than ten Freemasons. Then came the bands playing "Rule Britannia!" in a manner which suggested nothing so much as some private contest between their rival musicians. Mudbrook appeared to be holding her opponents easily, but Rockford came with a rush at "never, never, never will be slaves," and, thanks to their hard-working drummer, won a capital race by about three notes. Eight Aldermen formed the next feature of the show, each in his own private vehicle, thereby affording much pleasant variety. Nothing on wheels, however, could approach the Mudbrook fire engine—a time-honoured old-fashioned piece

of rubbish painted red. Several Foresters brought up the rear, while an unruly crowd followed and closed in this pageant on every side. The holiday people, mostly a mob of the roughest description imaginable, even at this early stage of proceedings threatened to give much trouble. The Mudbrook magnates were repeatedly accosted in a familiar and disrespectful manner, and one unfortunate Forester will probably remember to his death the series of remarks called forth by his somewhat spare legs as they appeared in white fleshings. Once, indeed, Mudbrook's banner, the most dazzling and biliary-looking "discord" in yellow and red possible out of a nightmare, was menaced, but nothing serious fortunately resulted.

The school children had been despatched to their destination about two hours before it was necessary, and their little legs ached, and their little noses were red with cold when Mr. Joskyn's chariot at last arrived. A waggon, brought early from the town, and draped with flags, formed a rostrum from which the ceremony would be completed, and into this the Earl of Mudshire was conducted. The Mayor stood upon his right, the Aldermen grouped round, Foresters and Masons massed together, as a guard of honour below, and the fast-increasing audience made a circle about the point of interest, crowding the unfinished buildings near, and covering every other available spot from which any view of the proceedings could be enjoyed.

After a short and impressive pause, Mr. Joskyn opened the business of the day with a few words which emotion rendered almost inaudible. So inaudible, unfortunately, that Alderman Green, who conducted his original anthem in person, with a bâton about as long as a barge pole, fancied the Mayor had finished his introductory speech before it was well begun, and, with one flourish of his ponderous wand, fairly launched the National School upon their song of triumph. The first verse of this lyric gem—there were eight in all—may possibly be enough to reproduce. It gives rather a flattering idea of what followed:—

"The great Earl of Mudshire
Among us has come,
And all Mudbrook's citizens
• Do give him welcome!"

The infants sang to warm themselves, so there was plenty of stirring sound. After some four or five stanzas the Earl of Mudshire, carefully assuming that fixed wooden smile which may be placed upon the features and forgotten, produced a pile of memoranda from his pocket, and buried himself in their contents. He had prepared an oration eclipsing all previous performance, and hoped, even if his remarks did chance to be considerably over the heads of his listeners, they would, at any rate, be received with silence and respect. Silence and respect, however, were something more than the poor Mayor could command. After Green's effusion was at an end—it died hard—Mr. Joskyn again essayed to make himself heard, but the heartless mob now realized its power. The event in hand was nothing to these rowdy masses from 'up river,' Mudbrook and her celebrities were nothing, and certainly some thirty odd policemen, who vainly endeavoured to find the most noisy offenders, were less than nothing. Amusement must be had at any

cost, and to Mr. Joskyn's dismay and indignation he was deliberately yelled down and forced to cease speaking. Trembling with rage the little man begged his noble friend to commence the great speech of the day with all possible speed, and accordingly the Earl of Mudshire, whose advance was the signal for a short cessation of the riot, glanced at the first page of his notes and began as follows:—

"It is with pleasure, friends, that I find myself amongst you this morning, and my pleasure is vastly increased when I remember the object of my visit to Mudbrook and the reason of this brave assembly. The vast and, I venture to think, intelligent masses about me, will now view for the first time this fine work of art I am shortly to unveil, a work alike worthy of its artist and those who have generously subscribed towards its erection. A nearer approach to the ideal in the general appearance of many growing towns, in our native country, is much to be desired, and I would fain hope that it is this longing for beauty and the picturesque which brings us all here to-day."

A murmur, breaking into still more openly expressed unquiet, warned the old gentleman that this supposition might, after all, be incorrect, and eager to interest his hearers, he missed about three pages of elaborate introduction, then proceeded:—

"Now, who was Julius Cæsar? One, you will doubtless answer me, who descended from the noble patricians; one, whose genius overcame all obstacles, and finally placed him at the head of the Roman empire. Of course we are all acquainted with these facts, so are our sons at school. But what have such matters to do with Great Britain? Nothing."

This being the case the assembly evidently thought that to dwell upon them at all was unnecessary. There were renewed sounds of disapproval, and the disgusted speaker, passing over two or three more closely written leaves, continued with another question.

"Was it because he defeated the ancient Britons, and slew them by hundreds when, under the renowned Cassivellanus, they fought against him, that your Mayor and Corporation place Julius Cæsar here among us now?"

Mr. Joskyn, who had partially recovered, was again utterly upset by this question. He looked bitterly at Alderman Green, and, it must be confessed, that scholar had never touched upon this business when speaking before the Board.

"No! certainly not," went on the orator, answering his own question, and thereby pouring balm upon two troubled souls.

"No! it is because Cæsar gave our earliest ancestors their first insight into civilization; it is because during the hundred years which followed his second invasion——"

The Earl of Mudshire was warming to his subject, and really flattered himself he had caught the public ear at last, when another serious interruption had to be endured. The erudite Billy stationed foremost among a group of "pals," began to find proceedings exceeding irksome, and now suddenly introduced a change and sensation by yelling at the top of his voice.

"Now then, guv'nor, push along and let's have them sheets down."

A roar followed this sally, and the insulted old gentleman shut his papers with anger, registering a solemn mental vow never again to speak before the inhabitants of Mudbrook and its vicinity.

Taking a glittering pair of scissors from the distracted Mayor the Earl of Mudshire hastened to end this dismal ceremony, and turn his back upon Julius Cæsar for ever.

"Cæsar, Sir, was not only a master of the art of War," he concluded, addressing his remarks to Mr. Joskyn, as if that miserable little gentleman was Speaker, and they were both in the House of Commons, "not only a warrior, but a statesman and orator, a lawgiver, a writer of history. And now, Sir," majestically raising the scissors, "do I sever this cord, unloose these snowy draperies and disclose the figure of the greatest hero of antiquity carved in pure white marble." So saying, he released the canvas coverings, and these rushing down on every side revealed Julius Cæsar's statue.

Had the Prince of Darkness himself been discovered standing on that tall granite foundation he could scarcely have produced a more profound effect.

Mr. Joskyn jerked his arms into the air like a man shot through the heart. He tried to speak, but his vocal organs failed him. The Alderman and Masons looked at each other and turned pale. Eyes and mouths on every side were opened in amazement to their widest limit, but even the mob was silent. As for the worthy peer who had disclosed this uncouth apparition, he continued to gaze helplessly upon it, repeating like a machine the last words of his peroration—"pure white marble, pure white marble."

There, in the bright sunshine, stood the "noblest Roman of them all" indeed, but Mr. Chiselle himself would have failed to recognize his handiwork.

The lofty helmet was now coal black, with crimson crest; from under long pointed eyebrows glared monstrous eyes; triangles of scarlet shone on the white cheeks, and an enormous mouth "grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile" from ear to ear. Blotches of paint were also smeared about the statue's breastplate and arms, streaks of red and black ran down each leg, and the two-handled sword now much more nearly resembled the red-hot weapon patronized by clown at Christmas. Indeed, as a colossal-coloured effigy of Grimaldi, the statue might be considered successful under its new shape, but regarded as a work of art it presented an exceeding painful and disgusting appearance, to say the least. At this horrid moment the band, which was stationed immediately behind Julius Cæsar and did not instantly take in the situation, mistaking a frenzied gesture from Mr. Joskyn for their cue, struck up "The Conquering Hero comes"—Rockford, in consideration of their recent victory, allowing a bar's start. "The trumpet to the cannoneer without," for it had been arranged, on the sound of music reaching the neighbouring coastguard station, a salute should be fired of ten guns, and now much noise came from that direction. Meanwhile, beneath the statue all was direst confusion. Mr. Joskyn survived the first crushing shock, and then gasped out with the ghost of his departed voice, "What, what is the meaning of this?"

A perfect yell of delight simultaneously raised

on every side was all the answer he obtained. No such ready-made "spree" as the dismay of the Mayor and his friends below, and this ludicrous monster above, had been expected by the mob, and now a good and amusing half-hour was anticipated by all. The Aldermen, herded together like frightened sheep, looked miserably at the distance which parted them from their vehicles and safety; while the Foresters and all others in extraordinary costumes began to yearn for home. Mr. Joskyn alone showed no fear. The poor man lost his head completely, shook his fists at the mob, and seemed eager to dash in among the jeering masses and find the evil doers for himself.

"It's a vile outrage, your Grace," he cried; "it's the work of some ruffians—Fenians from America for all we know. What can—"

Here something of size flew so dangerously near the Mayor's head that he was forced to wake to the danger of the position. No time could be lost. A yelling multitude was becoming every moment more pressing in its attentions and threatening to overwhelm the civic authorities in a body.

A momentary pause was, however, commanded by the Earl of Mudshire, who indignantly proclaimed a reward of five hundred pounds for the discovery of the author of this outrage, and then, half carrying, half dragging the Mayor, he forced his way through the crowd which opened out to let him pass by, but closed in immediately afterwards on every hand. A moment more Earl Mudshire had reached the carriage, and in spite of Mr. Joskyn's frantic endeavours to get out and return to the fray, both were driven rapidly from the humiliating scene.

Thus ended the disastrous and unparalleled events which took place at the introduction of art and beauty into Mudbrook. In spite of the Earl of Mudshire's five hundred pounds, and an additional hundred offered by Mr. Jeskyn for the same information, nothing ever transpired. The police force, notably two gentlemen engaged at the statue on Christmas night, proved amazingly rich in clues of every description; but, notwithstanding, the business has puzzled Mudbrook ever since.

Julius Caesar was found to have only lost a finger or two, and the tip of his noble nose after all. A severe scouring and some personal attention from Mr. Chiselle, who spent a day in the town some time afterwards, restored the statue to its pristine purity and magnificence. It is satisfactory to know that the colossal figure has never since been meddled with.

These events happened many months ago, and to conclude, we may mention that only last week Mr. Silas Joskyn enjoyed a pleasure which amply atoned for past sufferings and ignominy. A certain new dry dock of importance, near Mudbrook, has been officially opened by a real "royal person." Every detail in the ceremony was completely and grandly successful, and even Alderman Jones, who sat in the same building with royalty, at a luncheon which followed (and partook of a dish to which the Earl of Mudshire was also helped), has ever since spoken more respectfully of his Sovereign, and indeed of all matters concerning supreme temporal power or the heads of nations.

A HEART'S GARDEN.

IN my garden all the flowers
Lying dead, lying dead.
Pale and woeful winter hours
Came and breathed upon them, saying
"Come with us," and they obeying
Followed.

In my heart the budded love
Lying dead, lying dead.
Withered blossoms lie above
Certain graves among the grasses,
And my blooming graveward passes,
Shorn and shed.

Once upon the garden ways,
Long ago, long ago,
Shining sunny summer days
Beamed the blessing of the summer,
Ere the winter, cruel comer,
Came with woe.

Once upon my heart, ah me,
Well I know, well I know,
Shone love's sunshine goldenly.
Very short my joy thereat was,—
Just a summer-time, and that was
Long ago.

ARTHUR STROSS.

ON BURNT WOMEN.

BY J. W. SHERER, C.S.I.

THE bold act of Lord William Bentinck, in prohibiting the sacrifice of female life in India, through the rite usually, though erroneously, called that of suttee, was so successful that it not only stopped the usage, but also, in great measure, effaced the recollection of its nature, and the ritualistic ceremonies attending it. A brief notice of what the custom was in theory, and what it became in practice, may not, therefore, prove uninteresting, and indeed to some may seem even novel. It is not well to force philology on those unwilling to receive it, but a plain explanation of the word *suttee*, supplied by a Sanscrit scholar, will throw much light on the character of the whole proceeding.

Sat is, in Sanscrit, the present participle of the verb *as*, to be. The third person singular of the present tense indicative of this verb is familiar to every one in the Latin and French—*est*. The feminine form of this participle is *sati* (*suttee*), and has come to mean the woman who actually *is* a wife. Enough. The idea will have been caught. Marriage, according to Hindoo belief, is not a bond which, as with us, is to last till death (or Hatten) us do part, but a union which is completely consummated by death. The virtuous woman, by the act of perishing with her husband, reaches the higher degree of the positive wife—the Suttee, in fact—or wife that has actual existence as such. This was the transcendental view of the subject, and was doubtless urged, in glowing terms, by the Brahmins on the minds of widows till they became, in some instances, inflamed with a real desire of self-sacrifice; and in these cases, where the act was entirely voluntary, the element of

cruelty was less prominent. There was, however, even where the consent of the victim was undoubtedly, this amount of pressure exerted, that the widow who did not burn was held up to obloquy, and her miserable fate enlarged upon. She would be considered superfluous—would be relegated to menial offices—would be neglected, or if contumuously attended to, the very attention would be held equivocal. And we must be slow in extending appreciation to the more spiritual aspect of the rite, for it bears traces of a one-sided argument and of masculine ingenuity; since we hear nowhere of the propriety of a man sacrificing himself with his dead wife; though marriage might surely be made complete as well in one direction as in the other. The Mahomedan Government which preceded us in the general rule of the country, was greatly averse to the performance of the rite, and, indeed, prohibited it, but with the unfortunate concession that an allowance of the ceremony might be obtained from the local authorities. This opened the door to bribery, and rich families, at least, experienced no difficulty in burning their widows, for the single obstacle in their way—the consent of the Governor—was by no means an insurmountable one. The British Government mostly confined its interference to directing that in cases of proposed female sacrifice, it should be ascertained that the victim fully understood the character of the rite, and was quite agreeable to its performance. And this state of things continued to the time of Lord William Bentinck, who was appointed Governor-General in 1828. The local government of Bombay, however, greatly to its credit, had, some years before, taken upon itself the responsibility of prohibiting widows from burning themselves, without formally abolishing the practice. As may be supposed, the aspect of the sacrifice depended on the behaviour of the woman. Where, actuated throughout by a high-spirited, if fanatical, determination, she exhibited great courage, and met her end with dignity, a certain moral grandeur materially softened the horrors of the scene. But where, though supported by convincing arguments and excited by drugs, poor trembling human nature asserted itself, and the widow shrank from the terrors of a needless death, imagination could scarcely heighten the brutality of the spectacle. If the victim escaped, it was amidst a storm of execrations and contempt; or if she failed in her attempt, she would be dragged back by main force to encounter a fate for which she had no longer the least enthusiasm. It is true our Government interfered to prevent violence; but in native states, and even on British territory, through want of sufficient precautions, most distressing scenes occasionally occurred. Two narratives, founded strictly on fact, and illustrating the ceremony—the one in its best light, the other in its worst light—will perhaps be more readable than a detailed general account.

It was an evening in the spring of the year, and the sun was hastening to the west, when a young woman of some twenty years, above the average height, and beautifully formed, with handsome features, and eyes particularly large, full and commanding—took her seat by the waterside, under a grand state umbrella of red and gold. Her skin was discoloured with turmeric, her hair dishevelled and wildly ornamented with flowers, and her general look was that of one whose thoughts were

far away. The locality was that of the Sangam, or Confluence, near Poona, a lovely spot where the rivers Mula and Muta meet, and from whence the view of the Mahratta city has been pronounced enchanting. There were temples near at hand, enclosed in a garden, and here and there were observable flat stones with two feet engraven on them, and marking the site where a female sacrifice had taken place. But the immediate object which, on this occasion, attracted most attention, was a huge pyre supported by four upright posts. This was formed of substantial timbers to the height of a man's waist, and covered with bundles of straw and bushes of the dried basil plant. From near the top of the uprights was suspended by cords a roof of slender rafters, on which were piled as many billets of wood as the structure would support. The space between the pyre and the roof was closed in at one end and the two sides, with brushwood, straw, and the sacred plant—the basil; but the other end was left open, and formed an entrance, as it were, to a gloomy and sinister cave. The young woman, as she sat under the umbrella, distributed money amongst the Brahmins, and presented her friends with her personal jewels, retaining only her bracelets and nose ring. When not thus engaged she sat entranced—her hands joined as if in prayer and her eyes resting on the beautiful sky of evening.

Presently the body of a young man of thirty was taken up from the waterside where it had been lying, and was deposited within the hollow formed between the pyre and its roof. Sweet-meats were put in with it, and a paper bag of the dust of sandal wood. The widow rising, walked three times round the pyre, slowly but with a firm step, and without support; and she then seated herself on a square stone exactly opposite the aperture of the hollow. Here she accepted and returned the endearments of her friends, stroking affectionately the heads of those she loved, and letting her arms fall in a last faint embrace round the necks of the dearest. Then she turned from them, raised her hands on high, and bending her looks earnestly into the dark cavity, stood for a few moments like a piteous statue. But at last, without moving a feature, and unassisted, she mounted the pyre, entered the aperture, and laid herself on the right side of her husband's corpse. The Brahmins, who always seem to have been nervous on such occasions, lest any failure of resolution should take place, waited only for the victim to adjust herself, and then exhibited extraordinary activity. Bundles of straw were stuffed into the entrance of the cave, the pollen of red flowers was flung into the air, obscuring the scene, the ropes of the roof were cut and it fell with a crash on the wretched woman, whilst fire was in several places applied to the pile, and liquid butter poured on the rising flames by the nearest relatives of the victim. To add to the horror of the scene, the Mahratta guard (for Poona then belonged to the Peshwa) blew their trumpets and battered their tom-toms to drown all sounds of woe, and raise a deafening disturbance, such as the fearful drums of Santerre raised around the royal guillotine.

Thus perished Toolsee Bhai, in the pride of her youth and beauty, and so wonderful is the power of delusion, that the foul act of self-slaughter was regarded as one of the glories of her family. And

HOME CHIMES.

when a slab was placed where the pyre had stood, similar to those she had gazed upon with dying eyes ; and when on the stone were rudely cut the figures of her pretty feet, weeping women were sure to have gone there, and prayed that, if their trial should come, they might be found at the last, steadfast and religious as she.

But a different spectacle must be described. In the year 1796, a Brahmin named Bancharam, died at a village called Mujilpoor, a day's journey, south of Calcutta. It was the season of the rains. The parched earth, relieved by the heavy moisture, gave forth grass and weed and tangled undergrowth with extraordinary exuberance. The happy frogs croaked aloud in the tanks ; snakes shook off their long torpor and came forth with alarming activity ; the hum of insects at night was overpowering. The heavens which canopied the deep shade of the thickets, were coruscated with lightning, and the heavy throb of the thunder rumbled along the horizon. At times the showers fell with violence, and the hoarse water-ducts resounded in every direction. But the duties of religion could not be neglected. Bancharam's widow, it was understood, was willing to burn with her husband. She was old ; no one cared ; it seemed a good way of getting rid of her. But the fear of death had fallen upon the poor hag.

The preliminary observances had all been performed ; it was late at night, and dark and rainy, when the priests and relatives assembled on the bank of the Hooghly river, for what they intended to be a perfunctory ceremony. The body of the Brahmin was placed on the pyre, and the trembling old widow tied alongside of him, with ropes. Then fire was brought and the wood kindled. But the damp made the obsequies a tedious business. The slender crowd sat down in the darkness, and waited impatiently for the flames to rise. At last a fair conflagration was excited, when some curious person got up and peered amidst the gloom to see how the bodies were being consumed. To the consternation of all, he who had approached closely to the pyre, shouted out that there was only one body on the logs. Priests and relatives all sprang to their feet, and searched in the neighbouring jungle for the missing sacrifice. They got torches, and plunging under the wet leaves and amidst the thick grass, looked high and low ; till at last they found the poor shivering widow crouching where the brushwood was most interwoven. The slow flames had gnawed the ropes asunder that bound her on the untended pyre, and she, scorched and discoloured, but not disabled, had slid off the top, and crept on hands and knees into the sheltering foliage. Her son was one of the successful searchers, and would only agree to her shirking the fire if she would promise to drown or hang herself. But she pleaded for dear life, and he was inexorable. He should lose his caste, he said, and be dishonoured, and she must die. She caught his knees and howled for mercy. But with his own hands he firmly secured her with ropes. By this time the pyre was in full blaze. They stirred it with bamboos. The sparks ascended and illuminated the feathery foliage. And then the son lifted up his screaming mother and flung her into the midst of the flames. And they beat her down with staves till she was wholly consumed.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum !

The two vignettes that have been presented will give some idea of what the shocking usage was when brightened with all the hues of unwholesome sentiment, and to what, in many cases, it degenerated, when seen in its naked and undisguised form of pitiless murder. A few particulars remain which may be related, out of the great mass of details collected by those philanthropic pamphleteers who were most urgent for the abolition of the rite.

Tavernier, it appears, relates that he had seen bodies which had been brought from very considerable distances to be burnt on the banks of the Ganges, and the widows tied on to the pyre, when their husbands were in an advanced stage of putrefaction.

The same writer also mentions that from what he had observed, he concludes that the relatives of women who have announced their intention of being burned make use of them as messengers to the world of the departed.

He had seen a woman seated ready for cremation on the pyre where her husband's corpse was laid, to whom her kindred brought various objects ; some a letter, others pieces of calico, others money—silver or copper—with directions that they were to be delivered to friends already dead. The woman, when she had received all these articles, made them into a bundle and placed them between herself and the dead body.

The Mahomedans were very particular in the cases where the proposed victim had children, and where there was a babe not yet weaned positively forbade the ceremony.

There was, perhaps, not much difficulty, however, in evading this prohibition, for an instance is recorded where permission was given on the ground that, though the infant was not weaned, it would not die if deprived of its mother.

An account is given, on good authority, of a babe in arms, who was brought to see its mother on the pyre. The little thing recognised the accustomed face, and put its arms out to be conveyed to the welcome breast.

Softened for the moment by the slender cry of joy, the mother took the child, suckled it, gave it back to the attendant, and then directed that fire should be applied to the funeral logs.*

Amongst the anecdotes collected by the zeal of those most anxious for the prohibition of the usage there is one giving glimpses of a motive which the students of the human heart may well ponder with extraordinary interest. Perhaps a more curious psychological study has hardly ever been recorded. It will be found in the travels of the Dutch Admiral, Stavorinus, and was noted by Dr. William Johns, a strong advocate for legislative interference. A broker of the Netherlands Company, residing near their settlement on the Ganges, died, leaving a widow, aged only seventeen years. This girl he had systematically neglected, being, indeed, entirely under the influence of another woman to whom he was much attached. At his decease the friends of the widow frankly told her that they saw no necessity for her self-immolation, as it was notorious that her husband had treated her with disrespect and contempt. She replied that if he had not loved her, she had always loved him, that she had been

*Surely this incident would form a good subject for a picture.

once united to him and that the bond was eternal. The truth was, she perceived that her death would put her into a position with regard to her husband, which the concubine could never occupy. For though concubines and slave girls have often burned themselves with the man to whom they were attached, they did not thereby become suttées. Not having been wives at all, of course they could not advance to wifedom of the higher or more spiritual degree. And so, completely to defeat the alien who had deprived her of her husband's love, this young creature, who really could not be said to have had a proper experience either of life or of love, cheerfully encountered death, embraced and kissed the dead body, and directing the flames to be kindled, passed away, in her own opinion, permanently triumphant over her rival.

The result of Lord William Bentinck's firm determination must have been most gratifying to those who had long battled against the foul usage. Croakers predicted very serious consequences from an interference with the religious customs of the natives, and especially in a matter affecting their women. But the public conscience was with the legislator. And from the moment that his lordship put his foot down, and said, "Custom or no custom, I will not permit it; and any man aiding or abetting in the ceremony shall be charged as accessory to manslaughter, whilst the principal herself, who attempts such an act, must answer for her conduct at the public bar of justice;" not a murmur was heard.

And yet it would not be true to say that, though no resistance was thought of, the wish to perform the right died entirely out. The Brahmins were in favour of it, and their power and influence were, and still are very strong.

And in native states, long after the abolition, women, particularly those of rank, were sacrificed on the death of their husbands.

Runjit Singh of Lahore died in 1839, and the visitor will find in his mausoleum at that city, a raised stone platform, on which is a marble lotus flower, surrounded by eleven smaller ones. The central flower covers the ashes of the Maharaja, the others those of four wives and seven slave girls who perished on his funeral pyre.

The present writer, on acceding to the charge of the district of Cawnpore, immediately on the restoration of British power, in 1857, found that during the brief interregnum a widow had been sacrificed within three miles of the station.

had by all those who were to assemble there when Napoleon had landed and added England to his already rapidly increasing list of conquests.

She told me this little history herself, with her old figure drawn up to its height, and her keen black eyes looking over the calm blue sea, and, as the episode fell from her lips, it was easy to see how pretty she had once been in those distant days when she had a lover, and "Bony's" name served to quiet the children in the quaint old cradles, and to curb the riotous spirits of the boys, who are either old men now or dead too—drowned in the blue ocean mayhap, or fallen in some of the many battles, whose soldiers come from such quiet places as the Dorset village where our old friend lived.

Often we have said to her, "How little we could understand why Napoleon never came to harry the villagers, and make the coast his own;" but it was only just before she died, and we were walking in her garden, when distant guns proclaimed death to the partridges in the stubble, and when the hollyhocks, dahlias, and sunflowers nodded to each other across the quaintly bordered path, where the edges were formed of the bones of cow's feet, saved doubtless from many a jorum of broth, brewed for the poor folk in the parish, that she told us, in a mysterious whisper, how on such a night as this Napoleon did land in the tiny cove yonder, for she had seen him there with her very own eyes.

"It was a warm September night," she said flushing and blushing for all her eighty years, "and I could not sleep—he was out; and, despite the moon, I knew they meant to run a cargo round the point there, because the "venters" were on the wrong track, or had been bamboozled into going up country in search of a lot of brandy supposed to be hidden behind the chimney of Farmer S——'s kitchen; and though I felt nearly sure of Jack's safety, I could not help wandering about, hoping to see the frigate, or hear that she and her crew had accomplished the run.

"When I remember those days," she added, "I wonder how folk live now, all seems so quiet here; then there was always something going on, and we lived our lives, and did not dream them away; we were always hearing of great victories, or dreading Napoleon's landing, or running cargoes of lace and brandy—beautiful lace, of which I could show you pieces even now. At present we rely on our newspapers only for incident, and nothing like an adventure ever comes our way. Still I have had adventures; and so, I suppose, I must c'en be content with the remembrances of them.

"Look down from here and you will understand how I saw Napoleon. You see from this headland I can command a view, not only of the cove, but of the open water. Oh, it was a perfect night! inland I could discern the newly cleared wheatfields, and turning to the sea, at first I perceived naught save the glistening expanse of ocean, lighted up like day by the great yellow harvest moon set in a dark purple sky, dotted here and there with yellower glistening stars. I could see the lights in Portland, and in Weymouth village, where the King and Queen lay; but our own lights were out, and beyond the bark of a farmer's dog or the rattle of a chain in the barn in the hollow, there was not a sign of life, and I seemed alone in the world; it was very, very

A REMINISCENCE.

BY J. E. PANTON.

SHE was very tall and stately, and she was nearly eighteen; it was in September, she said she thought it must have been the year before Waterloo, when the whole coast was in a ferment of expectation, and they never went to bed round Lulworth without a last look at the sea, and a glance at the "Beckons," to be quite sure the signal had not been given that should rouse the village, and send the inhabitants post-haste inland, towards Salisbury Plain, where, for some reason or other, perfect safety was supposed to be

lonely, and rather eerie; but just as I made up my mind that I would go home, for there was nothing to see outdoors, and, as I cast a last look abroad for the ships far, far away, I discovered a black speck that, as it came nearer, I made out to be a longboat, moving swiftly towards the cove as fast as oars could bring it.

"I waited up there until I knew that it really was a boat, and then I crept down the coast-guard's path into the little cove. Eight men were rowing, and in the stern sat two other men, one wrapped in a great dark cloak, and with his hat drawn down low over his brow, and the other in some black raiment that appeared an ordinary civilian's dress, although the moonlight glittered on a sword and on a pistol he clutched in his hand. As I reached the shore and crouched low behind a rock, the boat glided in round the point, and the rowers lay to on their oars, and I could hear a whispered colloquy between the two men. Alas! I knew not their language, and so I could gather nothing from them of what they were or what they intended to do. At last the boat was beached close by my biding-place, and the two men got out; the shorter one of the two drew himself up, and taking off his hat stood for a few minutes as if in prayer, and as the moon shone straight in his face, I seemed to know it was the conqueror.

"I cannot tell you now what I felt, as those men walked up the narrow road into the village, peering here and there, about into pig-sties and over hedges, as if they were looking out for booty; but I dared not move. I only realized who he was.

"The men sat very silent in the boat, though every now and then I caught an unknown word in a foreign tongue; but after a long, long time, as it seemed to me, Napoleon and his aide-de-camp returned, smiling and complacent, and before I recovered my nerve, their longboat was moving away as swiftly and as silently as it came, its head straight for Cherbourg on the opposite distant coast of France. Of course I told my story, but equally of course I was not believed. I described Napoleon to the old sailor who had seen him often over there, and he turned white, and said it was a wonderful lifelike dream for sure. But it was no dream, my dear," she added, putting her hand on my arm, and speaking in a low voice, "it was no dream, for I saw that boat myself come straight away over the sea for miles in the moonlight. I saw it go back until it disappeared a black speck on the horizon, and I knew Napoleon once landed in Lulworth Cove, having made the whole journey there and back to Cherbourg, on a still September night."

RONDELS OF CHILDHOOD.

BY BERNARD WELLER.

II. IN A FAIRY-BOAT.

IN a fairy boat on a fairy sea,
All amber and gold, I used to float,
With never a wind blowing boisterously,

In a fairy boat.

And a voice as soft as a cuckoo's note,

Would sing while the breezes brought to me
Rare soft scents from a violet's throat.

In a fairy boat it was good to be;

Yet the charm has fled from the village moat,
And I sail no longer all fancy-free,

In a fairy boat.

MY TWOFOLD SELF.

BY H. C. DAVIDSON.

I, THOMAS MARSTON, am not as other men are. My thoughts are ever on the wing, flitting through the twilight like dusky bats, gone before I can trace more than their shadowy outlines. Whence they come and whither they go, I cannot divine; perhaps as they pass, some quicker, more powerful mind, shoots out its feelers and sucks them in. But for me, who am like an empty shell, they are mere whispers, soon drowned amid the roar of the sea that is ever in my ears; amid the wash of worlds perpetually whirling through space till my head grows giddy with the seething tumult and the incessant thinking of their vast circles. You never hear them! You are fortunate. If you would see the stars by daylight, you must descend into a black pit, and then look up; if you would hear the billows that follow in their wake, you also must be surrounded by a silence so impenetrable that speech is wasted into it only as a hopeless tangle of far-away sounds.

I am mad, you say. "One who reasons correctly from false premises," is Locke's definition of a madman. Are you quite sure that your reasoning is free from taint? A two-edged sword demands careful handling. I differ from you, I admit. But since the wise men of yesterday are the fools of to-day, who shall set up a platform of absolute sanity, and say that he and his fellows occupy it, to the exclusion of all others? Let us compare notes.

The singular mental condition in which I find myself came on like a new glove, with many struggles and the greatest difficulty. At length resistance yielded to importunity, and "now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" so that all semblance of my former self is lost. In brief, I am the shape of the glove. This is a fact. I remember facts, but not feelings. I once knew a man who was the nominal proprietor of a large estate, and the undoubtedly proprietor of many debts. Each of the fine trees before his windows was sacred to the memory of one or other of his creditors, and labelled accordingly, until the time when it had to come down to meet the bill.

My retrospect is not unlike his prospect, only much more dreary. The trees are there, stretching in a long sinuous line towards the horizon, and they are all notched—"blazed," as the Americans say. But the lightning has wrought havoc among them; the trunks are shapeless blackened masses, and the limbs leafless and deformed. The ground around is an arid waste; the air a changeless, soundless calm, into which never an eddy strays. Not a green or living thing meets the eye, nothing but those grim monsters which Time has passed by as he does the tombstones. They are hard, dry, sapless facts, where no sentiment would linger for a moment. Do you understand my memory now? It contains nothing but these facts. Like a half-filled sack, it has toppled over on one side. Under such circumstances, comparison between the present and the past becomes difficult.

The inability of my memory to retain more than the husks was the first sign that I had wandered from the beaten track. It had been preceded by sleeplessness and a gradual fading away of the

power to concentrate the attention, but to this I had paid no heed at the time. It was clearly a case for investigation. I had dabbled in every branch of science, devoured all the available works on mental diseases, and—what is less frequent—reasoned upon what I had read. Indeed, I have made a practice of relying solely upon my own judgment, for I have never put any faith in the opinion of critics, tea-tasters, and the like. Pigs, they say, are admirably quick in finding the buried truffles. It may be my curious mental condition, but I prefer to forage for myself.

Nevertheless, I was an inscrutable puzzle to myself. Was I a lamp burning down at one side before the wick was completely exhausted? If so, where was a fresh wick to come from? My medical man suggested opium and calomel, but believing that I was made of better stuff than either, I refused to have anything to do with them. By-and-by I got accustomed to the change, though it soon took a different turn. The twilight stillness crept on like a dream; then there broke into it the roar of the distant surges, scarcely louder than a faint echo at first, but soon increasing in volume, until at last I was the centre of a whirlpool of sound; and finally I became aware that I was two persons in one body. It was hard to trace the connection between these phenomena, yet the case was certainly growing in interest as well as in complexity. In my calmer moments I sat down to reason about it.

The first part of the puzzle I have already explained; the rest demanded more careful consideration. Eventually I hit upon a clue. If, I argued, each lobe of the brain is acting independently of the other, would not that account for my duality? And if the memory is localized in the grey matter between the two independent lobes, would not that account for its defective state? And would not this peculiarity of the vital electrodes prevent the bloodless condition of the brain which must precede sleep? The theory was plausible. I adopted it. In fact, I saw that I was an evolutionary product far in advance of your common domestic man with a huge amount of conceit packed into his single self. He had halted at a grovelling stage not much beyond the brutes; I, striking away on a path of my own, had travelled exactly twice the distance. If only I could still further multiply myself by some process of segmentation, there lay before me a marvellous future. I would literally become a host in myself, if indeed I did not ultimately achieve wings. Alas! this object is still unaccomplished, though my mental condition has undergone a further development which will be referred to presently.

The only practical outcome of my theory was the purchase of a note-book. *Ridiculus mus!* you exclaim. True, but the tiny creature was necessary to assist the lion. My duality was not without some drawbacks, which had to be obviated by artificial means. I had a dim suspicion that the doubling of myself had halved my brain-power. I determined to remedy the defect by making the twins study the same subject simultaneously. But in order to make any real progress, it was essential to describe for future reference the fleeting emotions that my memory refused to hold. Now you see the use of a note-book. For if the dual theory was correct, the peculiarity of my

memory would necessarily increase with time, and this has subsequently turned out to be the case. I set to work with great care, no detail of any importance being omitted. But my task was more arduous than you can conceive. I had to begin with the very alphabet, so completely was the past blotted out. When I had an emotion, I instantly jotted down the symptoms, but as I had no standard of comparison, they may sometimes have got under the wrong headings.

It was at this time that my quondam companions first took to avoiding me. I buttonholed one fellow as he was shooting by, and asked him the reason of this strange circumstance. He replied that I was too scientific. The reason was satisfactory, so I let him go; besides, he said, he was in a tremendous hurry, and I noticed that he really looked it. There could be no doubt that I was too scientific for these single dullards, who in their wildest dreams had never approached the wonderful possibilities that lay before human nature. The first hint at my duality had thrown their eyes and mouths wide open; a few moments later I had found myself alone. They could not understand me, and so came to shun me entirely.

But there was one exception—Jack Meyrick, a jovial young medical student, who alone seemed to have a faint glimmer of intelligence. At any rate, he frequently made appreciative comments upon my theory, and on one occasion expressed his sympathy with me in my isolated position. I noted the symptoms at the time. Here is the extract:—

“Sympathy: A slight trembling of the left eyelid.”

This will show that very little escaped my notice.

Jack was singularly thoughtful and attentive. He even entered so far into my schemes as to recommend me to engage a man, a sort of superior body-servant, who might assist me in my studies, but I preferred to keep to the old groove. I had always had a decided partiality for my own company. I never bored myself; I was never tedious, and never quarrelled. If the conversation slipped into an uninteresting channel, it was readily diverted. But now that I was divided, I had an immeasurable advantage over the common herd. I was able to get up the most delightful discussions between my two selves, some of them being carried on in such animated tones as to perplex my neighbours. Besides, I was beginning to discover that solitude is not so solitary as ordinary people imagine. Strange, new wistful faces clustered around my bedside, glided noiselessly to and fro in the room, and, when I spoke, formed a very excellent audience. They never uttered a word, merely watched intently. They never left me after their first visit, when they appeared as silent shadows, but soon grew substantial and also more numerous. It would have been absurd, then, for me to have engaged another stranger.

Just as I was on the point of explaining matters to Jack Meyrick, there arrived an invitation to a sort of tea-and-twaddle business at Mrs. Taylor's. She was the wife of the only medical man in the place, and these entertainments were given at stately intervals, about once every three months. My habits of observation had led me to notice

that a good many people fell ill after them. For this reason, and also because I detested the trumpery tricks of society, I had consistently held aloof from everything of the kind: so this invitation came as a surprise. I at once announced my intention of declining it, but Jack protested so vehemently that I wanted waking up a bit, that I at length gave way.

For obvious reasons I have not described what people call my personal appearance. I would have you picture, not the gross corporeal machine which is unprepossessing, but the remarkable twins that live inside it. Further details would be an insult to your intelligence. Candidly I admit that, in spite of their many excellent qualities, one of them is a fool and the other a knave; but then it is just the same in the outer world—the owl and the prairie wolf always go together. My note-book enabled me to differentiate the two, but I have not yet succeeded in making them club the faculties of which they have somehow contrived to get an unequal share. The knave, I regret to say, has latterly taken to roaming about somewhere outside. It is he that does all the mischief for which his stay-at-home, simpler brother gets punished with manifest unfairness. But this is rather anticipating matters.

In accordance with my promise to Jack Meyrick, I went to Mrs. Taylor's, and learned why people fell ill after her entertainments. The house was a pandemonium. The drawing-room would have held half-a-dozen with tolerable comfort, if they could have held their tongues; it was packed from floor to ceiling, and they all shouted. The crush, the heat, the din, were horrible. The whole air was in a whirl. Even the noise of the piano scarcely swelled the cascade of sound that was continually playing around my ears. Was this pleasure? I wrote down tumult as its equivalent. My eyes fluttered ceaselessly from spot to spot without finding a resting-place, and for the first time I became aware of a strange compression about the temples.

At length I was introduced to a young lady, and jammed with her into a corner, where we were obliged to remain for a couple of hours. Of what happened during that bewildering time I have no very clear recollection, but I do know that she was exquisitely beautiful. She talked, and sometimes asked questions, to which I could reply only in monosyllables. When I returned home I made the following entry:—"Love is laconic."

Her name, she told me, was Jessie Dawson; she and her mother had recently come to the town, and they lived in the same street as I did. The mother turned out to be an older counterpart of the daughter. I accompanied them as far as their door, and received permission to call next day.

Upon reflection, I was considerably surprised, and not a little puzzled, at myself. Was it the knave or the fool that had committed himself? It really looked as if the twins were getting mixed. How was my precipitation to abandon my own company to be explained, if not by a rivalry between the two? That evening the faces of my audience wore a saturnine expression that closely resembled a leer.

On the following afternoon I went to see Jessie

Dawson. I had fallen head-over-heels in love with her. That, I believe, is the correct expression. Let me describe my emotions. I extract the report from my note-book:—

"Before the interview: Pulse, 90; temperature under the tongue, 100°; respiration hurried. After: Pulse, 80; temperature, 100°; respiration normal: a slight sensation of sinking in the region of the pericardium. N.B.—The impaired state of the appetite, having existed for several months, can scarcely be accounted a symptom."

Those who have been under the influence of the same transient emotion will require no explanation of the foregoing note, but for the sake of the residuum I may as well add that I had proposed to Jessie and been rejected. I took it calmly. Had I not succeeded in defining a new emotion? Love, I had found, was merely a gentle rise of temperature, not unlike a brief sunset, glowing with pleasant warmth, and soon fading away into the cold grey of forgetfulness.

Jack Meyrick called in the evening to inquire how I had enjoyed myself at Mrs. Taylor's. After answering his questions with my usual directness, I went on to explain what had happened since.

He expressed the utmost astonishment at my haste, and I immediately noted down the symptoms:—

"A short pause, due apparently to difficulty in breathing, followed by an elongation of the face."

"But," gasped Jack, "you never saw Miss Dawson before yesterday."

"What of that?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing. Only—it's rather sudden, isn't it? How did she receive your proposal?"

"She went curiously white and almost ran to the door, where she turned and stammered out that she was engaged. The door slammed, and she was gone. That was rather sudden too."

"Engaged! Then that accounts for the stranger who has just arrived at the White Horse. Captain Markham, his name is. I was wondering what had brought him down here."

This information put a different complexion upon the affair.

"The sooner he goes the better," I said bluntly. "I intend to marry Jessie Dawson, in spite of a dozen Captain Markhams."

"Where are your moral feelings, Marston?" demanded Jack with a hard stare.

I referred to my note-book, but found nothing bearing directly upon the subject, the only entry under the letter M being:—"Moroseness, an upturning of the eyes and palms of the hands." But this was not one of my emotions. I had observed it in the parish clerk, and received the explanation from the innkeeper.

"Jack," I said, "I don't appear to have any moral feelings. Perhaps I shall strike them some day."

He again displayed the same signs of astonishment, so defective was his intelligence. After a while he sprang from his chair, and slapped me on the shoulder, so suddenly as to make me start.

"Look here, old fellow!" he exclaimed. "Those miserable works on morbid diseases of the brain are playing the mischief with you. Chuck them on one side—sell them—burn them—do anything

with them but read them! Your face is as black as a thundercloud. Now, confess that you feel worried and out of sorts."

"As a matter of fact, Jack," I answered confidentially, for I didn't wish it to go any further, "the twins don't hit it off as well as they might. But then twins never do, you know. When the process of segmentation has multiplied them, we—that is, I—shall doubtless be a very happy family."

"You want change of air," he continued, in his irrational way. "Change of air would set you up in no time, and perhaps bring about this segmentation; only I think you ought to have a qualified assistant to watch the process."

"Absurd!" I said. "I have too many as it is."

"I am going to speak to Taylor about your health," was his only comment.

As my cook entered at this moment, Jack hurried away. I took a great interest in my cook, who was in love with a policeman. It was by noting the red warmth of her face that I had so accurately gauged my own condition. But this evening her tones were harsh, and her expression can be described only as ferocious. I left my chair and walked hastily to the window, but her eyes still followed me with a cold, cruel, snake-like glitter. Something in connection with dinner was her pretext for inflicting this torture upon me. I ordered her out of the room, and sat down to study a work on hystero-epilepsy or demoniacal possession.

The book contained a large number of illustrations which, according to Jack Meyrick, were absolutely steeped in ghastliness. A lady who happened to see one of them started shrieking, and so continued until water was brought. For my part, I considered them both curious and interesting, though the twins always studied them with different degrees of attention. But now I found myself quite unable to thread the mazy sentences. They led nowhere; the words ran together without heed to grammar; the sense was blocked. What was the meaning of this deepening gloom? Presently, shadowy forms were interposed between me and the page. A remarkable change had come over the behaviour of my audience. No longer silent and watchful, they had begun to whisper and gesticulate; their faces were often horribly contorted; and more than once I had caught a faint sound of mocking laughter, trickling through the surging roar that was growing louder and louder. *They were fiends.*

At last I had learnt the truth, and shuddered at it.

At dinner they gathered around the table in such numbers that I sent the servant away lest she also should see them. Indeed her blindness on this occasion quite passed my understanding. When she had gone I raised the cover. "Something to tempt the appetite," the cook had promised to prepare, but I was at once struck by its objectionable appearance, and especially its odour. It was positively disgusting, like a perfumer's shop turned musty in the dog days. Ha! it flashed upon me in a moment. I saw it all—the ferocious aspect which even the woman's subtlety could not conceal, this deadly smell—an unsuspecting bachelor with money. This narrow escape brought the perspiration in great drops upon my forehead, my

body trembled, and my breath came fast and thick. Was this fear? I noted down the symptoms, and put a query after the heading.

After carefully smearing my knife, fork, and plate with gravy, I pitched the poisoned mess into the coalscuttle and locked it up in the sideboard. When the servant returned to clear away I wiped my mouth and assured her that I had eaten a hearty dinner. She looked about in a stupid sort of way, but never spoke. Did she see the hideous faces that filled the room? Apparently not; for when I asked her what was the matter, she replied—

"Nothing."

It occurred to me afterwards that she might have been looking for the dish, which I had inadvertently locked up with its contents. Indeed the confusion caused by my tormentors was so great that thinking had become almost impossible. But I had no intention of starving myself. The cupboard contained a few biscuits which, with a decanter of sherry, were quite as much as I wanted. It was a larger amount than I usually drank, but I was restless and excited.

When I returned to my chair by the fireside, the whole of the gibing, jeering, hideous crew followed, and grouped themselves in grotesque attitudes upon the hearthrug. It was not that they were oblivious of my presence: I was the object at which their mockery was aimed. The air was full of their fiendish laughter, above which rose the often-repeated words, "Jessie Dawson." Was that the meaning of the persecution? My temples were being compressed by an iron band; it grew tighter, tighter, tighter; my hands went to my head involuntarily; beneath this prodigious force I expected every moment that it would be crushed in like an eggshell.

"Ha, ha! she shall be mine!" I shouted, and the misshapen creatures rolled away from me like sand before the wind. It was the knave that had spoken; the fool had suffered quietly. I arose and shook myself, so great was the relief. Why should this man have what I wanted? Who was this Captain Markham, that he should stand in my path? What was to hinder me from marrying Jessie Dawson if I chose? Nothing, replied the knave. I was strong. I took up the poker and snapped it across my knee. Ha, ha!

The persecution had ceased; suggestions teemed upon me; the din was deafening. It was directed no longer against me, but against that monster Captain Markham, who had flung himself across my path. How intensely I had come to hate that man! Ah! there was an emotion that needed no groping after symptoms and headings. It was branded so deeply into human nature that no peculiarity of memory could affect it; and, standing almost alone, it had, I felt, acquired enormous power. Nevertheless, I made the following entry:—"Hatred: a hornet's nest." Perhaps you can now understand the buzzing, stinging sensations that had completely filled my head.

Presently I found myself walking along the street in the direction of Jessie's house. The knave, by his incessant taunts and arguments, had, I suppose, persuaded the fool to accompany him. Anyway, there we were, with part of that fiendish crew in attendance. Some of them never

left the room; like cats, they curled up on the hearthrug and awaited my return.

It was a black October night; the wind roamed hungrily along the deserted street, and over all sounded the swell of the distant invisible sea. There were no lamps, but the darkness was sentinelled by weird shapes, whose eyes gleamed brightly as I passed, and whose hands rose like silent semaphores and pointed out the way. My legs carried me forward; I knew not my own purpose.

The Dawsons' house stood back a little distance from the street. In front was a garden, enclosed by a castellated wall, over which a few stunted trees peeped and shook their leaves on the heads of passers-by. I pushed open the gate, and found myself confronted by a policeman. Was this another of that ferocious woman's tricks? I was in no humour to stand upon ceremony. The knave said, "Knock him down," so distinctly that the policeman started back, mumbling something in his boots.

"Speak louder!" I cried.

His answer was unintelligible, the clamour for his prompt removal being overwhelming.

"Speak louder!" I roared at him.

This time I caught his meaning. Captain Markham had stationed him there to prevent me from approaching the house.

Ha, ha! It was a glorious night. I grow excited as I write about it. I was marching down the street between those two long rows of spectral sentinels, their flashing eyes lighting my foot-steps, and their arms now pointing in the opposite direction. A right royal progress, with those shapeless imps trotting on in advance, now pointing onwards, and now turning with an indescribable leer. I knew that I was bound for the White Horse. Amid all the din the words were ringing in my ears incessantly, and I was glowing like a fiery furnace. Here was another sensation that there was no need to grope after. I noted it thus: "Revenge, a limekiln craving a sprinkling of water." Ha, ha! that was my pleasant sensation. I wanted something cool that would increase the heat a hundredfold. A grand paradox! Forward: to the White Horse!

But before I had gone very far I drew aside into the shelter of a doorway. There were lamps coming up the street, and I scented some unknown danger. They stopped in front of my own house, a few yards short of my hiding-place, and, peeping out cautiously, I recognized Jack Meyrick, Dr. Taylor, the chief magistrate of the town, and three policemen. That other, at any rate, would tell no tales; so what was the object of this nocturnal visit? Were they also in league with the cook? Evidently, they meant mischief of some kind. I waited until my visitors were safely inside, and then, with a laugh, continued my walk.

The White Horse occupied a prominent position in the square. The animal was painted on a board that creaked above the door, and the window on the right, where a light was burning, belonged to the visitors' sitting-room. I was ablaze with the all-devouring heat; the ceaseless cries had risen to a prolonged shriek; I approached with a rush. Caution was unnecessary, for not a person was to be seen. Oh, the excitement of that moment! My heart leaped as I strode up the

stairs; my pulse was going at fever-pace; my eyeballs were scorching their sockets. Grouped around the door were my fiendish retinue, gibbering and pointing. "Forward!" cried the knave. Ha, ha! only a sprinkling of water for the fiery limekiln.

It was a glorious night. I laugh now as I think of my burst into the room, and the pompous rising from his seat of that tall military-looking man. The elongation of his face, I knew, denoted astonishment. He spoke, but of course unintelligibly. His face changed colour when I locked the door and took up the poker. He may have been afraid of me then. He had good cause to be, but I observed none of the other symptoms noted down under fear. Indeed, he clenched his fists and advanced towards me. I waved him off, though the knave was crying, "No quarter!"

"Captain Markham," I said, "I have come to argue with you." Again he spoke, but with the same result as before.

"I can't catch your whispers," I went on. "I am here to assert my right to Miss Dawson's hand. You set a policeman at her door. He is there no longer. Mine is the right of the strongest. Ha, ha! what better right than that? I am two persons in one body, and I hate you with the intense hatred of my twofold self. Can you understand—"

I stopped suddenly. His features were making the most hideous grimaces at me, his limbs were twisting in and out like a tangle of snakes, and his body was one moment of dwarfish stature and the next of a size so gigantic that it almost filled the room. He also thought that he could mock me with impunity. "Could he not feel the heat of the furnace? It was scorching him already. A fierce exultation was glowing through my eyes, and my hands had a restless movement that was under other control than mine.

There came a scuffling sound outside, followed by a knock. I laughed; it was such a glorious night. I always laugh when I think of it. When the door was broken open I was standing on the hearthrug.

"For once he is natural," I said, pointing with the poker. Did I say that I had knocked him down?

The intruders fell back, huddled together like a flock of sheep, their forms and faces a blurred indistinguishable mass in the doorway. I invited them to enter, and waved the poker at them, but they only moved closer together.

"Only a sprinkling of water," I cried. "The limekiln is thirsty. Come on!"

The beat was intense. I looked upon the knave's handiwork, and the furnace glowed. My retinue were twirling around in a frantic dance; a swirl of wild laughter filled the room; I joined in it. This was pleasure. Surely this was pleasure. I had noted it down as tumult. Ha, ha! it was rare.

"I have asserted my right," I proclaimed to the mass in the doorway; "the right of the strong. It is my mission to prove it."

I advanced with the poker. They crouched for a simultaneous spring.

The scene changed with magical suddenness. The laughter had given way to a clamour of threats, and the dancers had thrown themselves into menacing attitudes. They were twisting, writhing, wriggling around me, and eternal hatred

blazed from their scowling faces. *They were fiends.* Every corner harboured a group of them. They sprung out and shook their misshapen fists at me as I dashed by. I was racing along the street, with the yelling pack of human hounds at my heels. What monstrous forms started out of the darkness! What a roar was overhead! How madly the world was whirling onwards! Had it travelled into chaos? Ha, ha! it was a glorious night. I grow excited—

* * * * *

"The patient here paused to commit a murderous assault upon his attendant, who, he believes, is a rival for the hand of a young lady, also a lunatic. As he has correctly stated the cause of his malady, his narrative may perhaps serve as a warning to others."—J. Wilson, M.D., Superintendent of the — Asylum.



"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.



CHAPTER XIII.

A CHILDREN'S PARTY.

EDITH HERON entered the house towards the close of a bustling time. Lady Mary was in high nervous feather, proud of the occasion which warranted so much business.

"Now Daisy"—Edith's old pet name—"everything is ready for you," said Lady Mary, "but I expected you before. You are late—not that it matters, dear. Had you come earlier you would have found us in a pretty stew."

"I thought I had time to run down to see that poor girl," answered Edith; "aunty, I promised her: sick people do reckon upon promises, you know."

"Child, you shouldn't have gone to-day. You will have tired yourself out. I am sure your conscience might have lain quiet for once."

"No, aunty, I should not have been satisfied with myself, I should have been thinking all the night of poor Bella's disappointment."

"Ah, always a martyr to that conscience! But didn't I hear someone at the door? Fie, child! Was it not Mr. Pulsford, then? You might have asked him in for a moment—fie, Edith!"

"No, aunty, it was not Mr. Pulsford," returned Edith a little guiltily; "it was Mr. Aylmer."

It was a tell-tale colour that compelled her to be truthful.

"Aylmer!" ejaculated Lady Mary, holding up her hands.

"Yes, aunty, Mr. Aylmer was there at the Penmans, he accompanied me home. Oh, aunty, he has been good to that poor girl. I shall always respect him. You remember me taking some jelly you were good enough to let Davison make. When I asked her if I might take her a little wine, the mother said some one kind and good had sent them some through Dr. Aylmer, he had mentioned

Bella's case to a friend of his own. I feel as sure as if Mr. Aylmer had confessed it to me that it was really he who gave the wine. Oh, I do think Mr. Aylmer is a good man, and much maligned."

"Yes, yes, child," said Lady Mary brusquely, but with something like moisture in her eyes; "but get upstairs with you," the old lady urged, her tremulous hand on her grandniece's hair, "what would Mr. Pulsford say to Mr. Aylmer escorting you home, if he heard you so full of praise of Mr. Aylmer's actions? Men readily become jealous. It is not wrong on your part, my darling; no, no. But, oh the men do become so jealous, and there is such mischief made. There are girls, no doubt," said Lady Mary shrewdly, "who would think you clever for playing double to make your game. How terrible of an old woman to talk so, eh?"

"Aunty, how can you lecture me? What a quaint shrewd old aunty you are to have such craft. Oh, aunty, he could never be cross."

Lady Mary shook her head. "Is it wise, dear, to run risks?"

"I met Mr. Pulsford when I was with Mr. Aylmer," ventured Edith slyly.

"Oh Edith!" exclaimed Lady Mary with real distress, "that was unfortunate. How did he look? Vexed?"

"No," laughed Edith, "he couldn't be vexed, for we were playing tit-for-tat. He was much more confused than I."

Lady Mary was aghast at the spice of mischief in her Edith's merry voice.

"Why should he look confused? Oh Edith, I am afraid he has taken offence."

"I think not, aunty. Cicely Devensey was with him. We saw them a long time before they saw us, and Cicely chattering away—oh I laugh at Cicely, how quickly she makes her friends."

"I don't like that Cicely Devensey," rejoined Lady Mary anxiously, "she is a very selfish girl. But for her father and her money she would be a common person. I can never regard her as anything else. I don't like Cicely, Edith; I would not encourage her to come here so much if I were you."

"The mischief is done perhaps, aunty," suggested Edith mischievously; "you know Cicely has five thousand pounds."

"Does Mr. Pulsford know that?—has he learned that?" inquired Lady Mary in some trepidation. "Oh, dear"—her voice fell—"I am afraid Cicely would not hesitate to take him away from you, Edith, if she thought it possible."

"Oh, aunty, how can you judge Cicely so cruelly. If Mr. Pulsford is to be gained over so easily, would it not be better for me to lose him?"

"Yes, child. But then if he is not tempted away—if he loves you, child, it would be unwise to vex him. You must think seriously of being settled. If I were only as rich as I once was, things might be different."

"Different? Oh, aunty, that is as much as to say I might throw Herbert Pulsford over, that we would never have received him, how shocking to be sure—I take him because we are poor. I almost wish he would be tempted away. I am not afraid of the prospect before me, a governess all my days, coming home to you in the evenings."

"But the Dean's children will grow older," reasoned Lady Mary, "and I shall not live so

many years. Is my life worth a year's purchase now? Oh, child, I must have you in a home of your own, and a husband to love and protect you."

" You musn't hurry me, dear aunty—marry in haste to repent at leisure—let me have a little longer time."

" I am not hurrying you, dear, am I? But, Edith, there used to be another saying—happy is the wooing that's not long adoing—no, child, I do not want to be parted from you, no, no—but get away, you wilful girl. I am sure Mrs. Pomfret will be cross with me for not getting you off."

Edith bounded up the staircase two steps at a time. She felt buoyant, some newer hope seemed to animate her, yet she was unconscious what that hope was. If she had stopped to think, perhaps she would have whispered to herself that she was happy at the thought of regaining her freedom. There had not been much romance in her acquaintance with Herbert Pulsford; to a certain extent he had been forced upon her, the interest other people took in bringing them together robbed his visits of all romance. Besides, Edith felt herself humbled and obliged to submit.

On her little white bed lay her dress. It had been worn before, but it looked beautiful. What care Davison must have bestowed upon it to make it so presentable. She must not forget to thank the faithful servant and friend before she went to the Deanery. Everything placed ready to her hands, her few trinkets, her gloves, her collar and cuffs, that was poor dear aunty's foresight—how full of business she must have been all this day. Before the dress she stood a few moments, with hands clasped, in silent admiration, it was succeeded by contemplation, sometimes we are just enough to think we cannot thank sufficiently the dear hearts who love us, for what they do and have done for us.

She sank into a chair, oblivious of the passing minutes, one thought leading to another, but all her thoughts reverting back. Cicely Devensey? Would Cicely Devensey stoop to cajole away her lover? Would he be proof against temptation? Was Cicely of so mean a spirit, he so craven? She felt a little sadness oppress her, but she fought against it. She declared to herself that she was happy now, and could be happy all her life as she was now. But over all the mellow tones of a sympathetic voice seemed to lend to her reverie its courage and its hope.

If, some few hours later, Aylmer's eyes could have rested on the scene in the Dean's large drawing-room, it would have done his heart good. Indeed, it was one of Du Maurier's pictures—the children, evidences of loving care and exquisite taste, the few adults standing up amongst them with almost startling pictorial effect. Edith Heron's eyes were bright, her features glowing with animation, she seemed to have put away from her entirely her daily anxieties, those petty carking cares and forebodings which wear us more than heavier troubles. Those only who have experienced the straits in which a reduced income has placed them know what is meant by keeping one's head above water. Yet, with Edith Heron, it was a matter of thankfulness that she and her dear old aunty were not wholly wrecked, that she had health and strength, and that her poor old aunt bore up so bravely under reverses. How hale and cheerful Lady Mary was for her years.

There was no happier household in all Treminter, small as it was, and necessarily restricted. Once upon a time Edith could remember how Lady Mary was petted and looked up to, followed by a species of adulation, now sometimes she fancied these selfsame people showed a tendency to attempt to patronize her. Often they got such terrible retorts from the matter-of-fact Lady Mary that Edith scarcely dared to look at them.

But now Edith Heron looks so happy and no longer careworn it would be unfair to her to dwell upon the troubles of her life. She seems to have caught from the dear children their trustfulness and lightness of heart. It was some pleasure to her to find all the little people regarding her as their *chef* and *solo arbitress*. Not even Lilian's and Alicia's stately young aunts were allowed to share in her authority. But then their manner was not sufficiently free and *debonnaire* for these character-reading pixies. All the Master Reginalds and Victors and Julius wish to dance with Miss Heron; and the clamour is loud at times, simply because half a dozen young demoiselles cannot be her *vis-à-vis* at one and the same time. Although apparently a difficult matter she does end in contriving to please all.

" Next, next, next!" Edith cries: and one young wit was heard to declare her memory was as good as a gardener's.

The Honourable Miss Wiverne had to be content with secondary or tertiary rank, with some few mammas and elder sisters who dropped in as the fun was becoming fast and furious. In spite of the Dean's injunction a few elder brothers managed to sneak in, but they had to keep in the background, the Dean's eye most uncompromising, and they painfully aware of it. He would not have the little people's pleasure marred, as it too often is in many houses.

" We will have the children of larger growth by-and-by," said he, from his coign of vantage. So the few young men and maidens had to be content with their position as wallflowers, and the scant chance there was of flirtation among such clamour and laughter. Tall Augustus and fat Frederick could only deliver commonplaces which both themselves and their fair neighbours felt were excessively stupid.

But Edith Heron could not undertake so much without experiencing fatigue. Long before the supper hour she began to wish she could getaway. Mrs. Pomfret at last observed Edith's look of weariness, and endeavoured to get to her, which was no easy matter.

" You must stay until supper," whispered Mrs. Pomfret. " I cannot get on without you. You can leave the little folks for a little time; come with me. You can go through the cloisters, you know."

" But I want Miss Heron to go home with me," said little Ralph Devensey, who was within earshot. " Cicely will not come for me. She went out with Mr. Pulsford; she often goes out with Mr. Pulsford, I know. I don't like him; you don't, Miss Heron, do you? I don't care to go home with ma's maid, she's a cross old thing. I would rather go with you, Miss Heron."

" Hush, hush!" began Mrs. Pomfret.

" Ralph, I shall not go past your house," said Edith; " you will go with Alice and Josephine."

" I don't like girls," said the young misogynist.

A sight of the magic-lantern in the rear, and preparations for darkening the room, somewhat appeased Master Ralph, and Edith took advantage of the opportunity to make her escape. As she was going up the staircase she met the Honourable Miss Wiverne coming down.

"Are you going, Heron?" asked the elder one, with the superciliousness she had for a maid-servant or a footman.

"No," answered Edith curtly.

"I thought you were going," said the supercilious lady, a little crestfallen. "I wondered if you were going alone. I thought one of the footmen might see you home, but they will be wanted presently."

Edith was vexed at the intolerable manner of this young lady, who, but for the Dean and other of her friends, would have been placed under the necessity of going out or doing something for herself.

The younger sister, more kindly, endeavoured to remove the ill impression her sister had made.

"Miss Heron, I will ask him to allow some one to see you safe home, when you are ready. One of the young men here must go with you."

"Oh, no, thanks; pray do not trouble the Dean," said Edith hurriedly. "I am accustomed to finding my way home alone."

With some haughtiness the elder one passed on, but the younger sister looked behind her regretfully, and Edith repaired to the children's room, where Mrs. Pomfret said she could rest without fear of disturbance.

It was striking twelve when Edith Heron, throwing a thick wrap about her, managed to reach the hall-door. She wished to get away unobserved. The children had all gone, and Mrs. Pomfret was lying down upon a couch in the small drawing room, declaring herself quite worn out. Lilian peeped out of the schoolroom and caught a glimpse of Edith.

"Oh, aunty, Miss Heron is going!"

Lilian ran out and seized the skirts of Edith's dress.

"I have wished you good-night, once, Lilian," pleaded Edith; "let me go, dear, I want to get home."

"Oh," said the elder Miss Wiverne, following Lilian, "does Mrs. Pomfret know you are going? Has she said you may go? But of course you will not be wanted any more."

It was intolerable. Edith could scarcely credit her ears. Even the child appeared dumb with surprise.

"Aunty, dear," said Lilian, a little frightened; "Miss Heron is not a servant, she is a lady."

"Thank you, dear," said Edith warmly; "I can remember that."

Her double meaning was not lost upon the lofty young lady; she retreated somewhat crestfallen. But, as Ella Wiverne said, Beatrice was always wounding people with taking this foolish ground: Beatrice was continually whipping herself for her indiscretion and haughtiness.

"Good-night again, Lilian," said Edith. "Give me one kiss—there, darling, be good."

CHAPTER XIV.

A FRIGHT IN THE CATHEDRAL.

The night air, though cold and keen, was a relief to Edith. She found the air cooler still in the

cloisters. She hurried along, covering her mouth with the wrap, fearful of a chill after the warmer air of the house. It was not an absolutely cold night, but Edith was wise enough to take precaution. Face-ache and neuralgia are only too often results of forgetfulness or negligence. The keys were in the little door, and the door although closed was not fast. She pushed it open and passed within, giving the door a slight push, intending to leave it as she found it. It closed gently, then she heard a click, and she remembered that it was a spring lock. She did not think much of it at the moment, no one was likely to be in the cathedral, and any one else who might wish to pass through, the door would only require unlocking. A little eerily she felt for all that as she went along, the echo of her feet monotonous and distant, then re-echoing again behind her, the slender columns ghostly in the moonlight, which with weird effect flickered through the ancient stained glass. She passed along quickly, the echo of her footfalls now seeming to come to her across the transept from the chapel. She reached the transept, crossed it, and went down beside the chapel, passing the white recumbent figure of a good bishop. She was far too sensible to be superstitious, but in the dusk she always felt timorous passing this beautiful memorial of a once revered prelate. Fancies crept about her of her sensations if by any chance she would have to pass a night among these ghostly monuments and effigies. Each chapel was a shrine. Under her feet lay the dust of many episcopal dignitaries, scions of a royal race, feudal earls, cadets of noble families, warriors who had won renown on field and sea, heroes for whom there had been rewards in life, an honourable burial, their names and doughty deeds perpetuated in marble, in close contiguity to their dust. Her thoughts would render her a little nervous, and her eyes would glance this way and that, in spite of all her endeavours to convince herself of the folly of being fearful. Why should she be fearful? Inanimate dust could do her no injury; these brave and noble men in life would have been her protectors. What satisfaction could there be in scaring a simple maiden, even had they the power to rise and confront her in their ceremonies. But she felt herself unaccountably timid this night, beset with weird and credulous imaginings. She reasoned with herself, her nerves were a little unstrung with the night's demands upon her strength. She had been put out, Miss Wiverne's tone had been arrogant, that young lady's treatment of her ungenerous. Indeed it was so. By the time she reached the Galilee porch, the little door by which the organist and choristers usually gained access, she had become calm and confident again, and quite capable of lecturing herself for her foolish fears.

She sought for the ring of the door quite leisurely, and endeavoured to pull the door ajar. Turning it, the catch uplifted, but still the door remained firm. She was confident the door opened easily on its hinges, she had never before had any difficulty with it. She tried again, using all her strength, it still continued firm; her heart beat fast with the consciousness that further trial must indeed be futile. Her fingers went to the bolt, but even had it been possible for her fingers to touch it, they would not have had power sufficient to shoot it back. The old lock was of a

past age, the handiwork of a cunning locksmith, and was not to be lightly regarded.

"What must I do?" whispered she to herself. She had become calm again, with the hopeful conviction that some one must shortly pass outside, and she would be able to make herself heard. But then this door was in a dark shadowed angle, her voice, if heard, might not be recognized as that of a human being. Here in this corner its own echoes would stifle it. Perhaps in the transept she might have more hope of success. Before leaving the door however, she shouted through the keyhole and rattled the ring energetically. She waited a moment or two, but there was no response. She must go to the transept or to the door by which she entered. The transept door abutted upon the street, she might make herself heard there. The other—well, there was this possibility—the sacristan might not yet have fetched the keys, she did not rightly know whether the sacristan did fetch them when the door was left open, or whether the Dean sent the page or the footman. She hurried across the transept, and almost at a run traversed the aisle. But of what avail shaking the firm door? She bent her ear to the keyhole, and hung upon the door, if the keys were still in, she must tell, her nerves were tense and her hearing acute. She could hear nothing, their jangle would have been music to her. Some one had taken them away soon after she entered. She reproached herself for not staying in the transept, some one might have gone past. But it was getting so late, passers by would be few—could she expect any after midnight?

When she reached the transept door, she was almost out of breath, but she exerted herself again, crying out through the keyhole, and with all her remaining strength rattling the irons on the door.

"Davison will be sitting up for me," whispered she to herself despairingly, then with more hopefulness—"I shall be missed, inquiries will be made and they will find me here. Oh, what a fright I shall have given them. I only hope aunty is in bed, and will not know but what I have been delayed. If Davison is only thoughtful enough not to alarm her."

She sank at last on one of the forms near the door. On Sunday afternoons, until the cold weather set in, there was a short service in the nave, a short sermon would be preached by the Dean, the Archdeacon, or the Sub-Dean. A verger had carried a couple of these forms near the door. On the form on which she sat there was a book of the introits. She took it up mechanically and opened it, and found that she could even see the print, the moon shone so clearly down upon her from the 'Bishop's eye' over the arch. She turned the leaves over, reading and killing her weary time best as she could. She began to feel more assured that there would soon be some one inquiring after her. Still she could not help feeling the weirdness of her situation, looking up the grotesque heads, from whence the arches sprung, had grim and sardonic frowns and leers, even the carved finials and bosses of the dark oak screen were transformed into grinning and threatening visages. She felt some of her old terrors revive, she shivered slightly, then gave an impatient shrug of her shoulders at her own weakness, compelling her eyes to rest on the bold print of the book in her hand.

But the time seemed so weary and long waiting there. She rose from her seat and went to the door and listened, holding her breath; she heard footfalls, but instead of passing they seemed to die away; she was not certain whether they were in the cathedral or outside, everything echoed. She shouted again, almost hysterically, hoping to arrest them, then listening, her heart seemed to freeze, for there came an echo down to her, seemingly from the vaulted roof, a harsh discordant laugh. She scarcely dared to lift her eyes, she found it difficult to convince herself that this lugubrious sound was but an echo of her own quavering voice.

"I will never come through the cathedral alone again," she whispered to herself, her heart beating fast. "What have I gained to-night?"

She held her breath, standing perfectly immobile. Again the laugh—louder and more discordant it burst upon her affrighted ears. It was so unexpected. This time it was unmistakably real. She was so afraid now, she scarcely dare breathe, without moving her body she endeavoured to turn her head in the direction from whence the cry proceeded.

For a moment she believed herself the victim of a cruel and foolish trick. Surely Pulsford was not so thoughtless or heartless as to stay late in the cathedral to scare her. He might think it pleasantry, and come down hurriedly to reassure her, but such pleasantry was always foolish, if not dangerous. Then she recollects that Herbert Pulsford had professed a great aversion to practical jokes, and held practical jokers in abhorrence. He confessed to having himself been a victim more than once, and acknowledged the resentment he had always felt.

"I must not think so meanly of my friend," thought she, ashamed of the suspicion. But she wondered to herself why he, of all people, should be the first person to incur her distrust. But she was too excited to think calmly of anything longer than a moment. Her eyes were uplifted, scanning the screen across the arch, the graceful curves of the organ, the fluted columns rising nobly up to the apex. She started almost off her feet, it must be extraordinary fancy, but one of the bosses of the screen seemed to move, nod to her, beckon, then disappear. She would have fled to the western side, but she was petrified with horror, impotent to move. Her blood curdled in her veins, she asked herself if she were going mad, tottering to the door she sank down upon her knees. But there she could see the carved rood screen, and the head had again appeared, and was still more horribly engaged in its grotesque gestures and excitement. Surely no human face, no human body, could have such gestures, exhibit such contortions. If human, some control would be exercised. Head and shoulders were now swaying violently through an aperture, as if madly determined on precipitation upon the stone pavement below. So nearly did this horrible figure succeed in its apparent object, that Edith, no longer able to control herself, screamed until the roof echoed and re-echoed with her cry. At the same moment the mysterious object disappeared. She controlled herself with an effort, partially conscious that relief was at hand. In the street hands were groping at the door. Her panic reassured itself, she cried out wildly:—

"Open the door—open the door! Oh, quick!" Then she steadied herself. "Oh, perhaps you cannot; go round to the Dean's door, the keys are in it, come through the cathedral to me if you dare—I dare not retrace my way."

"Who is there?" inquired a voice, sounding as one familiar in her ears.

"Oh, pray hurry—do be quick, I am afraid—come down the nave to me here."

She dare not pass that dreadful screen, she must wait until the timely succour reached her. Then once the door open—fly. It would almost be like flight for life itself after this horrible midnight hour. It seemed so long waiting, holding her breath, that she began to despair with the fear that perhaps she had been misunderstood. But a moment later she heard footfalls and the echo. Nearer and nearer they came. No goblin, but a human figure, a man making all speed. Whoever he might be, her heart was going out to meet him in very thankfulness. She dared to look up once more, to direct her eyes towards the dark screen, but the hideous head, the high shoulders of ghoul or phantom did not reappear. But for the discordant laugh, the weird cry, she would have again believed it all a trick of her disordered mind.

"Mr. Aylmer!" cried she with an exultant and hysterical sob, and sank back with her head against the wall.

Aylmer stooped down, the voice was sufficient. Right through he had surmised that it was his fair new friend, who, by some untoward accident, was imprisoned in the cathedral. Crouching in the shadow, she shrank from him, not yet master of her fears.

"It is Miss Heron?" he asked.

"Yes"—but it was more like a sigh escaping her.

"Have you been in captivity long?—I see you are nervous and agitated. How has it come to pass?"

"Oh, I have been so afraid," acknowledged Edith faintly. "I have been so terribly alarmed." She had scarcely regained her composure, she was overpowered with the sense of relief.

"Ah, you are overcome," said he compassionately. "I do not wonder at it. You will tell me when we get outside. You will feel better—take my arm, Miss Heron."

She rose to her feet, only too glad to accept his offer.

"Yes," returned she, "you are right, I shall be better out, I feel better now."

Passing under the shadow of the organ she shuddered and grasped his arm more tightly.

"Mr. Aylmer, I have been terrified," began she voluntarily. "I cannot think it imagination. At first I thought it was my foolish nerves, but I heard such wild laughter—oh, and it moved its head and made such horrible gestures, up there over the screen, beside the organ."

"Indeed—has there been a trick—any scoundrel—?"

"I really do not know what to think."

"There is nothing there now," he murmured, scanning narrowly the top of the screen on either side of the organ.

"Oh, let us get away," urged Edith, still timorous.

"Of course; but if it is a trick—whoever has

played it will wish to get away now without being detected. I should like to discover the miscreant or miscreants. It would be an easy matter to get in the building with the door left open. You found the transept door fast?"

"Yes; but Mr. Aylmer, I cannot think any one would wish to frighten me."

"You closed the other door after you, I suppose; or was it closed by any one after you entered?"

"I think I must have pushed the door too violently. I heard the click of the lock. I don't think any one would lie in wait merely to frighten me. Were the keys in the door when you came to it, Mr. Aylmer?"

"No, I trod upon them, they had fallen out, I should think."

"They would fall when the door closed. No one would care to get into the cathedral to frighten me; do you think any one would, Mr. Aylmer?"

Aylmer's face was stern. Earlier in the evening he had again chanced upon Cicely Devensey in the vicinity of the cathedral. He had not a good opinion of Cicely Devensey. Cicely would think it a fine piece of fun frightening her bosom friend no doubt. She knew that Edith's nerves were tense and highly strung. Cicely's nerves might be of cast-iron, she would not care a jot if she had to spend a vigil in the silent minster, the luxury of exciting terror would preclude terror from entering into her own soul. Cicely would only grow impatient with protracted waiting for her victim. Cicely if she did take such an idea into her head, would yield to the sudden caprice to have the laugh. She would carry out her trick without a thought as to its ultimate effect. Strange that Aylmer's suspicions should rest on Cicely, as Edith's had done on Herbert Pulsford.

"It is a thing that can be accounted for," said Aylmer. "You are quite sure, Miss Heron, you heard—"

He began to think that he might be a little unjust upon Cicely Devensey—if after all it had been but a trick of Edith's imagination, timid and a little distraught finding herself a prisoner? Cicely would not get away from home at so late an hour without comment, even if she got away from home by stealth, there was the risk of incurring her parent's remonstrances upon her return. Wilful as she was, Cicely was not undutiful nor without regard for her good name.

"If I had not heard," replied Edith, "I should have thought I was labouring under what people call an optical delusion. I endeavoured to make myself believe as much until I really did hear the most horrible laughter."

Aylmer was silent. Their feet fell without echo on the strip of matting. Then they reached the uncovered pavement again. They had not proceeded many paces when a most unearthly shout arrested both, Edith Heron shaking with fear again.

Aylmer felt his own blood curdle almost. "Well," he remarked, "there can be no delusion. Wait a moment—do not be alarmed."

"Oh, for heaven's sake do not leave me, Mr. Aylmer!" implored she.

"No—no, my dear Miss Heron, I had not thought of doing so."

But he turned round holding her arm tightly to him, and took her hand. He was looking intently upon the screen.

"It is clear moonlight, but from here the shadows are dense, we should see better in the transept. It was certainly a voice."

Still watching, he became conscious that some one was gesticulating, apparently leaning out of one of the apertures.

"Some one is there, that is certain. But how they have got there, or why, is a mystery. Perhaps it is some one who is also captive there. Fancy if it should be Mr. Pulsford!"

Edith might have laughed at any other time. It was too sudden a transition from grave to gay, she could not doubt the chuckle there seemed to be in her cavalier's throat.

"I don't know—" said she, scarcely knowing how to reply.

"If it be *him*, and he cannot get out, he will have an objection to staying there the night. Perhaps the door leading up to the loft is fast. If it is some one who has thought to play a trick, and they have been caught in their own trap they deserve to stay there. I will see you safe home, Miss Heron, but I will come back. I am determined to sift it. What is more I will lock the door we go out by, so unless they have a way out—"

The small hand now released grasped his arm perfectly trusting. Aylmer was only restrained from making some declaration of his regard for her by the consideration that he would be taking her at a disadvantage, she had been too much overcome to hear calmly any pleading.

Out of the pile she did seem to him to breathe more freely, recovering her calmness and self-possession. But she made no attempt to withdraw her hand or relax her grasp. Once only did she recur to the predicament she had been placed in, partly by her own act of thoughtlessness or absence of mind, and that was when Aylmer was leaving her.

"I think I never had such a fright in my life;" it was a little forced laugh that came after such an admission. "I do not know how I can thank you," added she earnestly, "indeed you seemed to come to my relief just at the right moment. I must have fainted or become crazy if no one had heard me. I do not know whether I shall sleep to-night."

"May I return if I can get the mystery explained?"

"Oh," demurred she, "I cannot expect you to be at so much trouble, it is long past midnight now. I hope aunty is not sitting up. I have not learned yet why—but I have no business to wish to know by what good fortune you chanced to be passing so late."

He was embarrassed for a moment, then he laughed.

"That can be explained later, Miss Heron. I will return shortly. I don't think I could sleep myself if I went home without sifting this affair thoroughly."

Davison, hearing their voices, came to the door; she had her bonnet and shawl on.

"Oh, missy, you have given me a fright!" exclaimed she.

"Is aunty in her room?" inquired Edith.

"Yes, Miss Edith; but she would sit up a long

time. I began to think you must be staying the night at the Deanery. I should have been easier in my mind, if I had known you really were stopping, missy. I was just a-coming round, Miss Edith!"

The old servant opened the door for Edith to enter, and Aylmer heard Edith say to Davison:—

"I would have stayed—if I had known. I might have done. Oh, Davison, I have had such a fright!"

(To be continued.)

DESOLATION.

WHY should I not go wandering through the rain,

The cruel driving rain, and maddening wind?

Ah, it were more unkind

To turn me to my life, and live again

A placid, peaceful life, as free from pain,

As those dear days, now left so far behind!

Oh, rain, thou faldest on my dear one's bed,

I laid him down below thee, winter sky,

Where all I love doth lie,

Cold, coffined, 'mid the mouldering, hopeless dead;

Their kisses kissed; their last love murmurs said,

Parted from all they love; they know not why.

I could not rest beside my warm bright fire

And know he lay out there in storm and wet

I did forget

That grief and sadness had begun to tire,

Were I content with warmth. Here I feel night

The man I loved through all life's jar and fix.

Breathe me one word, dear husband. See the storm

Comes from your heaven upon the riven earth:

When that did have its birth

Thou mayest be: thou, in some unknown form

I never clasped—yet could I know thee warm

And safe, one word could fill my heart's sad

dearth.

Thou dost not answer. Silence with fair hand

Laid to her lips, doth show an empty nest

Dear love, thou art at rest.

Thou carest not that rain sweeps o'er the land;

Alone, for evermore, I take my stand,

And wait till Death's dart strikes in turn my

breast.

Yet when the storm-wind blows and chill rains fall,

I cannot let thee lie alone out there;

I, too, will have my share.

For in the wind I'd hear thee should'st thou call,

Thou might awake beneath thy sodden pall,

And were I nigh thou'd know thou wert my

care.

J. E. PANTON.

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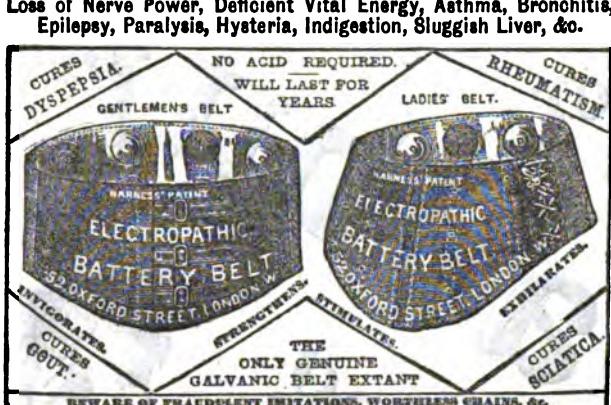
MISS M. HUDSON, Twyford, Derby, writes, March 23, 1862.—"Several months ago I purchased one of your Electropathic Belts. I need not describe the symptoms here, but refer you to my letter of June 17, 1861, No. 3,144. I have worn the Belt every day since that date. It has been an untold comfort to me. I would not be without one, and cannot say enough in favour of your Belts. All I regret is that they are not better known. I shall be glad to write to any lady who may wish to hear more particulars respecting my case, and shall certainly recommend your appliances to my friends."

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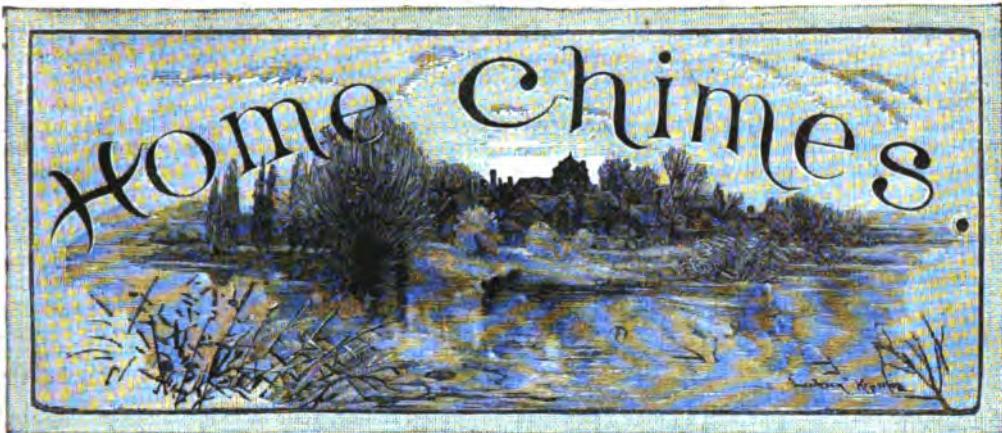
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

"ALAS! POOR GHOST."

BY ALISON.

Author of "Hetty's Hero," "A Heathen of the Day," &c.

—

L.

CHESTERWOOD HOUSE had stood empty for seventeen years when its lord came to see it and consider whether it was the sort of place he would like to live in. He was born there forty-two years ago, but the north-country air was too keen for his Italian mother; and as soon as his father died, when John was only five years old, Lady Ilderton had run away with him to her own Italian castle, and had left Chesterwood to a limited staff of servants and a quite unlimited host of spiders. He used sometimes to try to talk to her about his northern home, but she always shuddered when he began the subject, and turned the conversation. She said it was a horrible, gloomy old place, full of rotting wood and strange noises, and ghosts and legends, and the sun never shone on it, and the sky was never blue, and instead of ilex and orange groves, there were only the dreary firs, black and weird all winter and summer through, and the cold north wind shook and shivered in them. So the child grew up to think of his father's hall as something full of dark, terrible mystery, and he wove romances in his head about it, of which the materials were his mother's shuddering avoidance of the topic and her vague hints and his own misty memories.

He could remember the outside of it best: the grey turrets rising into the clear northern sky and the pigeons that flew about them. He remembered the dark fells that rose behind it, so gloomy on a dull day, so free and fair when the sun shone on them and the cloud-shadows raced across them. He remembered the great hall with the men in armour, of which he could not help being

rather afraid, just because he knew they were not real men at all; he would not have been in the least afraid if they had been mailed warriors in the flesh; he would have asked them all about their adventures. The armour on the right of the great fireplace had been worn by Sir Gilbert Ilderton in the Holy Land. What fine stories Sir Gilbert could have told him if he in the flesh had been standing there inside his armour! and the other, Sir Julian, had fought at Otterburn, and the child had thrilled at counting the dints upon the mail that might have been made by the lance of the great Douglas himself. But with the spirit that he could not help feeling must still be inside the armour, he did not wish to hold intercourse at all.

He remembered nothing so distinctly as the men in armour; but when he came to the old house one dreary November afternoon, it seemed as if he had not been away from it many days, he remembered it all so well. The housekeeper, Mrs. Ridley, was very like her mother who had been there in his father's time. He went all over the house with her, recognising everything and drinking in all her stories thirstily. She had them all at her finger-ends.

He would not have let her off one single detail, even had she not been revelling in having such a listener as she had never had in her life. He heard the history of every room, of every old cabinet, of every famous person who had slept in the old beds with their faded hangings; she showed him from the windows every point of view interesting for scenic beauty or romantic legend; she told him the story of every portrait in the gallery or in the rooms. She had all his ancestors' histories by heart.

"That is the Lady Ilderton who was carried off to the Tower and died there, is it not?" he asked, glad always to show that he recognised one of the portraits and remembered the history of it, and this one Mrs. Ridley had chanced to pass over.

It was the portrait of a beautiful girl of one or two and twenty, with bright hazel eyes and hair of a peculiar ruddy gold, such as Francia loved to

paint; a face full of daring, a most sympathetic face; a straight, fine nose, and a proud, sweet mouth. She was dressed in pink satin and had a white rose in her hair.

"That is Cecilia, Lady Ilderton, your great-great-grandmother, sir," said the housekeeper in a curious constrained voice, but very distinctly, as if she were making an assertion of the truth of which she was perfectly certain, but which she half expected to be disputed. "She was the daughter of Lord St. Oswald, and she was born in 1724, so she would have been a hundred and sixty years old if she had been living now."

"Which, of course, she could not be," said Sir John lightly.

As he spoke a door opposite was opened; he looked up to see who came, and a quick gasp, that was like a cry of stifled terror, escaped from his lips, for there before him stood the living presentation of the picture he had just been looking at: a girl with ruddy gold hair and hazel eyes, the same fine nose and mouth, the same proud bearing—the same woman; what did details matter?—the woman herself come down from the canvas.

He glanced back at the canvas for a second, suspecting some trick had been played upon him, but the portrait remained exactly the same. Serenely, Cecilia, Lady Ilderton, looked out from her dark background and its heavy oak frame, in her pink satin gown. Then he looked at the girl who stood hesitatingly just inside the door, and he saw that there were differences of detail between her and the portrait, but that, important as these were, they had quite escaped his notice, eclipsed by the overpowering fact of the likeness of face and figure.

There was first the difference of dress, which was so marked that you would have thought it impossible to imagine for a moment that the newcomer could be Cecilia, Lady Ilderton, come down from her frame. Instead of the lustrous pink satin gown, made in the picturesque fashion of the second George's reign, square cut at the neck, with a train of figured brocade falling from the shoulders behind, and rich lace hanging at the elbows, her prototype wore a plain brown woollen frock, made most evidently by a village modiste of this nineteenth century, plain as to design, clumsy in the carrying out even of its modest aim. Instead of the bright daring that shone out of the painted eyes and the winning smile of the beautiful red lips, there was a strange dazed fear in the living eyes and a piteous droop at the corners of the mouth. When she saw Sir John a sudden gleam came into her face, and it was at this moment he caught sight of her, and then the likeness was most startling. But the gleam that seemed like recognition died out, and the weary look returned, and she sighed heavily.

"Will you kindly introduce me, Mrs. Ridley?" said Sir John, recovering from his stupor of amazement. He spoke with extreme courtesy, as if he were requesting an introduction to a princess; for in spite of her common dress and her presence in the house, where a young girl could have no possible right to be unless she were a servant or a friend of the housekeeper's, he knew by her proud bearing and her way of walking, and her exquisite hands with long white taper fingers, like those of the portrait, that she was a lady of very high degree indeed.

"This is Sir John Ilderton, Cecilia," said the housekeeper, nervously. They both started. Sir John was surprised at the coincidence of the name. Then she bowed, and Sir John, who was used to Courts, saw at once that she was used to them too, and that the stately grace she had learned from them clung to her in every movement of her common life. The Court ladies he had known had been very free and easy indeed when they were in *mufti*, as it were. But this girl bowed like a queen receiving an ambassador, with such gracious dignity that even diamonds and a train could not have added to it. Instead of the brown woollen dress seeming an incongruity, you simply would not have seen it at all; she was clothed so entirely in her own grace, and everything else was invisible.

"Mrs. Ridley, your introduction is incomplete," Sir John began; but to his surprise and annoyance the housekeeper turned abruptly towards a window and said, "If you will come here, Sir John, you can see to Otterbourne."

He reddened, and looked at Cecilia with a world of apology in his eyes, as if he would say, "Pardon the eccentricities of an old servant, but you probably understand her better than I do."

She shrugged her shoulders and tossed back her golden head, and said, contemptuously, "You see you must not ask questions, sir. You are not to know my full name, so you will be obliged to call me Cecilia, too, which is certainly a most unwarantable familiarity, and, under the circumstances, monstrous disrespectful and mightily ridiculous."

Her voice was extremely sweet, and her manner of speaking had something half foreign in it, though high-bred to a degree. Her long words sounded rather pedantic to a man whose women-friends would have said "quite too" where she said "mightily." But there was something bewitchingly refreshing in the novelty of it.

Mrs. Ridley stood looking on, not angrily, but resignedly.

"I should be glad if you will tell me," this beautiful mystery went on, "where the Prince is just now. I see that you have not been prepared to meet me, so consequently you have not been taught what you must say to me. People tell me amazing strange things, and they deny everything that I know to be true. I should like to hear what you have to say, as a person perfectly unprejudiced."

Sir John could not help glancing at the housekeeper, who was tapping her forehead mysteriously, and trying to make her lips form a word inaudibly.

"She is telling you that I am mad," said Cecilia, contemptuously. "Do I look mad?" She glanced at him with her beautiful laughing eyes. All the bewilderment and sadness had gone out of her face. Mad? No—the most brilliant, fascinating creature he had ever seen! Sir John laughed his denial. "I should not like to enter into a contest of wit with you, madam," he said.

She smiled a brighter smile than ever; there was a sort of glad recognition in it. "Now I know that you are a friend," she said. "I am sure I must have seen you somewhere, though I cannot remember where. It is vastly impolite of me, but I think I have been ill; you will pardon me."

"You asked me a question, madam," suggested Sir John. He called her madam because in the

first place he could not call such a fine lady by her Christian name simply, and in the second there was an old-world grace about her, especially in her manner, like the scent of dried flowers and the quaintness of delicate porcelain, and the formal address suited her. "I think you wished to know something about the Prince of Wales."

"The Prince of Wales? Yes," she answered in an eager tone, and very low. "But then that depends on whom *you* take for the Prince of Wales," she added with impatient disappointment. "The people here are so dull; they are buried in the country and are thirty years behind for news. They think the old Queen is reigning still, and they say there is a Prince George of Wales, but they laugh when I talk of Prince Charles. One has to be cautious, but as your name is Ilderton I know you must be on the right side."

Sir John's heart was wrung with pity and disappointment. How deceptive madness can be! This bright girl's mind, after all, was "like sweet bells jangled, harsh and out of tune." He said quietly and gently, "The Prince of Wales is in town, I believe, but I do not keep myself up in the Court Circular. I have just come from abroad."

"Yes, I know, they told me," she answered impatiently. "I hoped you had brought me a message from the Prince to say that he was abroad and safe. It is all dark!" she cried, mournfully. "I cannot understand it. Tell me, for Heaven's sake, who is reigning at present in England!"

Her language was strong, but the information she required was easily supplied. "Queen Victoria is at present Queen of England," said Sir John, as if he were being examined in class at school. "You will find a list of the reigning sovereigns of Europe in any diary. There is one, I believe, in my pocket-book."

"Let me see it," she cried eagerly. He produced it, and she read the list with intense interest.

"France, Republic? What does this mean?" she asked, looking up. "It is not a real, true list? What has become of the king?"

"He died a year ago," Sir John answered, supposing she meant the Count de Chambord.

"A year ago," she repeated, looking at the date on the front page. "Then this is really 1884?"

"Really and truly," said Sir John.

She sighed. "I am afraid, then, that all they tell me is true. But this is a strange list. What about the States of the Church and all the Italian duchies? And who is reigning in Poland? They have forgotten it altogether. Where is Belgium? I never heard of it; and there seem to be a great many kings of very strange places. Prussia—yes, that is a kingdom now."

Sir John was much interested in imparting information. This girl's education had evidently been utterly neglected because her mind was supposed to be weak. What cruel injustice! She was as quick and bright as any girl he had ever met. What a delightful occupation it would be while he remained in this out-of-the-way corner of the world to help to lift the cloud that hung over her poor mind by letting a little knowledge in, that would be to her like the sun breaking through a mist. It was an odd sort of vocation to have come to him, but a very pleasant one.

"I shall be happy to receive you in the rose-garden at two o'clock," she said graciously. "It is cold and the roses are long over, but I have no suitable apartment at present that I can use for receptions. Doubtless you will see that discomfort set right."

She bowed and left the room in her stately way, leaving Sir John in a state of amazement mixed with amusement beyond description.

"Who is she?" he asked.

"Oh! sir, if we only could find out; it would be a good thing for her, poor thing. Nobody knows where she came from, and she can give no account of herself at all. She says she has lived here for some years, but you know, sir, every servant in the house has been here twelve years at the least, and I have been here forty-four years come Christmas, and none of us ever saw her until one afternoon when the workmen were in the house—there were repairs to be done in the upper rooms before you came home, sir—she came walking along the picture gallery in a queer faded sort of dress like a picture, and the sun shining straight upon her golden head, and Jane Clark came running to me and said one of the ladies in the gallery had stepped out of her frame. You will have seen that there certainly is a likeness, sir," she added, glancing at the portrait of Dame Cecilia Ilderton.

"A likeness! She is the picture itself."

"So she thinks, sir; that's what she has got hold of with her poor head, and nothing can drive it out. She persists in saying that she sat for the portrait. She had likely heard all about Lady Cecilia, for she told us all her story, and we cannot find out who told it to her."

"Poor thing! Such delusions are very common."

"And then the way she was dressed, sir! in a queer old silk gown that all fell to pieces when you touched it, and diamonds round her neck, and her hair was dressed like the hair in the picture. Oh! she was a queer sight. We don't contradict her now; it's no use, and it makes her very angry. We call her Cecilia because she says it is her name, and one name is as good as another to call her by, but none of them dare use it to her face but me—to see the way she rated the servants for taking the liberty! Now you have come home, sir, you will be able to think what we must do with her."

II.

A MONTH passed over and Sir John was no nearer a solution of the mystery in his house than he had been on the day after his arrival; no nearer finding out who his strange guest might be; no nearer coming to a decision as to what must be done with her. Sane or mad, she was undoubtedly a lady of the very first degree, and had been educated carefully, though the delusion that had taken possession of her had presumably blotted out much that she had learned and filled her mind with those odd fancies instead. Of course it was most improper that a lady should live in the same house as a solitary bachelor, and it was fortunate that there were no families of his own rank near to make unpleasant remarks. The country people simply took her for a mad peasant girl, and never thought of any impropriety in her staying at the house any more than if she had

been one of the housemaids; the more distant gentry had not heard of her existence. A few neighbouring squires called upon Sir John, but they never saw Cecilia, and had not the keen eyes and inquiring minds of their womankind, who would certainly have found out all about her if they had come to the house with their husbands.

Cecilia was troubled by no question of propriety at all. When she first appeared in the house, she had asked for her husband and children, and she always wore a wedding-ring. Then she had declared they were all dead, and had cried bitterly and shut herself up; for when she had pointed out Sir Francis's portrait, and claimed him for her husband, and a bonny, white-frocked boy for her son, Mrs. Ridley had said, "That is Sir Francis who died in Italy in 1784, exactly one hundred years ago, and the little boy is Sir James, who died in 1804," she had given way to a burst of grief that was unusual considering that the subjects of it had been so long ago mourned and so long forgotten. She wanted to wear black, but Mrs. Ridley pointed out sarcastically that the most disconsolate widow had never been known to wear mourning for more than a hundred years. So she wore such gowns as were given her, but her heart was in mourning all day long.

She had now reconciled herself in a measure to circumstances, and was fairly happy with Sir John. He would not let her mind dwell much upon the past, but he always treated her as if she were the person she imagined herself to be, and forbade Mrs. Ridley to call her Cecilia. "It irritates her," he said, "and will make her worse. Insane people are always humoured and indulged now; it is the only way to cure them. I see improvement in her already; she talks less and less of the past."

"Then is it your orders, sir, that we must say 'my lady' and 'Lady Ilderton'?" asked the housekeeper, with a tone in her voice that would in a younger servant have presaged a month's warning.

"No," said Sir John colouring slightly; "say simply 'madam.'"

Certainly he found his new position very pleasant, amateur lunacy physician as he had constituted himself. The instruction she most needed and most enjoyed was of the very sort that he was best qualified to give; he had an insatiable thirst for political information and social gossip. A stranger overhearing their ordinary conversation would have taken her for a brilliant woman of the world, and envied Sir John his advantages in such constant companionship. It was constant, indeed. Morning, noon, and evening they were together, sitting in the old library or wandering about the grounds. That stranger would have shaken his head, and said how dangerous such a state of things must be; but then, you know, he would have taken them, as he saw them, for a lovely and charming young woman, and a man who, though much older than she, was not utterly removed by the weight and dignity of years from such a possibility as love. He could not know that the lady was insane, the victim of a hopeless delusion, and the middle-aged gentleman her keeper, tutor, and physician; that what to a passer-by might certainly have borne a strong family likeness to love-making, was merely

medical treatment, carried out by an amateur, but carried out apparently with immense success.

For changes had come over them almost imperceptibly. The first change in Cecilia was that she came to allude more and more rarely to the past, and then to avoid it altogether as a painful subject. One striking effect of this change was that she avoided the picture gallery, as if she did not wish to be reminded of the painted Cecilia who hung there and of her older delusion. The change in Sir John was born of the change in her; he gradually forgot to all intents and purposes that she was insane, and though he did not dispute the fact, when Mrs. Ridley brought it back to his mind, he was intensely annoyed at being reminded of it. Another change, a less important one, and one directly consequent upon these, was that Cecilia was dressed like the lady of rank she believed herself to be. Sir John had sent to town for dresses for her. The only available pattern that could be sent to Bond Street was the curious old moth-eaten silk she was wearing when they found her. Sir John had mentioned it as an old gown belonging to an ancestress of his which happened to fit the lady remarkably well, and from which he wished the new garments to be modelled, so far as modern fashion would allow. They were required for ordinary wear, not for fancy dress.

She was charmed with the lovely evening dresses that came for her: ivory satin, pale blue brocade, stamped velvet in rich colours, and endless yards of rare old lace; and she looked like a princess when she appeared in them, more radiantly beautiful than any woman he had ever seen. But she did not care so much for the neat tailor gowns Sir John told her she must wear during the day, though he liked her in them best of all, perhaps because she looked so very modern and so very sensible in them.

She was certainly better, Sir John thought, one evening when they were studying Dante in the old oak-panelled library. He was reading aloud, pausing now and then to discuss a favourite passage. She sat opposite, in a huge carved chair of black oak, dressed in ruby velvet, cut low and square in front with soft old lace falling about her neck, and diamonds—her own diamonds—gleaming on her breast and arms. The diamonds had been the most bewildering puzzle of all to Sir John. Mrs. Ridley had taken them from her, believing them to be paste, but still too fine to be worn every day, and she had given them to Sir John who, though he said nothing about it, knew them at once to be real, and he gave them back to Cecilia.

It was Christmas Eve, and as cold and turbulent a Christmas Eve as the most conservative heart could wish for: the wind and snow were beating on the window-panes outside, and whistling and sputtering down the wide chimneys. Yes, she was quite well now, Sir John thought; not even the English lunacy laws could authorize her forcible detention in any place against her will, or deny her perfect ability to enter into any legal contract. He recognised the fact with a strange pain at his heart. Now that she had completely recovered her reason, he had no excuse for keeping her at Chesterwood. She must submit to the social code to which the sane world all agree, and Chesterwood could be her home no longer.

And what would Chesterwood be without her,

and what would his life be without her, this beautiful, nameless, homeless creature? He knew what his life would be: like the lone hillside out there, over which the winter winds were howling—dreary, desolate, and dark.

He gazed at her as she sat in the deep, black chair opposite, resting her gold head against the carven coat-of-arms, while the firelight lit red lights amongst the soft wavy coils of her hair, and flashed and flickered on the diamonds upon her bosom and gleamed on the rich folds of her dress. What woman in all the world could better have filled the position that she seemed to be filling now, while they two sat together like man and wife at the hearth of his forefathers? But how could he, the head of an ancient honourable house, ask to be his wife a woman as destitute of descent as Melchisedek, king of Salem, himself, or Aphrodite risen from the sea-foam. The thought of Aphrodite troubled him as a comparison; she would not have proved a desirable wife for a steady-going English gentleman, for all her beauty.

But how to bid her go? How could he turn any lady out of his house, especially a lady who, without the least positive self-assertion, held herself with the natural dignity of one who knew herself to be its mistress.

Her eyes were closed: perhaps the soft rhythmic flow of Italian verse, combined with the crackle and murmur of the frostily-burning fire, had made her drowsy. And the storm beat against the windows, and roared over the moors and shouted down the chimney.

Suddenly she awoke with a start, and looked round with wide eyes and parted lips, every vestige of colour gone from her face. "I hear them coming!" she whispered, "don't you hear the horses? I told you before that I heard them, and you would not believe me. No, it was the wind. Why, Frank!" she exclaimed, as if she had just recognised him in Sir John, "how is it that you are here? You should have been a hundred miles away. They told me you went yesterday. Where is Father Giannelli?" He was sitting in your place a moment ago."

"Cecilia, you are dreaming," said Sir John, in terror lest her reason should be tottering once more.

"Dreaming! Am I?" she asked, puzzled, but now perfectly awake. "And yet I am certain that Father Giannelli was sitting where you are just now, reading Dante to me."

"It was I who was reading Dante. Who is Father Giannelli?"

"Why, our chaplain, of course. He was teaching me something strange. I forgot what it was named. He told curious tales of it: how he could send one to sleep so soundly that one could not hear a cannon fired at one's ear, or feel a dagger run through one's arm. Sir Francis forbade me to talk of it; he said it was all lies and imposture. Ah! now I know I was dreaming. It all happened—so long ago! It was on such a night as this, wind and snow and storm; and this Italian reading brought it back."

Who could have spoken more reasonably than this? And for the first time Sir John thought he could see a dawn of light break upon her dark past and her clouded mind. She had been upset by some mesmeric experiments, and that would account for any amount of mental aberration.

"And he mesmerised you—the Italian priest?" said Sir John, quietly and assertively, hoping to lead her gently into an explanation.

"Did he?" she asked, the vacant wonder coming back into her eyes. "I don't remember. Frank said he must not, but I wanted to try to see if it were true. Frank had escaped, you know, and Father Giannelli and I were left at home, in charge of little James. I was frightened. I kept thinking I heard the soldiers coming, for you know we had a great many papers about us concerning the king's business, and Sir Francis had nearly been caught at Clifton and had ridden home post-haste and then escaped to the coast. Father Giannelli told me stories to entertain me and keep me from listening for the soldiers."

"Oh, my love! my love!" burst from Sir John's lips. In the shock of disappointment his heart's secret escaped from him. It was all a false hope; a delusive appearance of recovery. She was never, never to be his, and knowing it, he knew how he could not live without her, how he would have cared absolutely nothing had she lacked everything that the world would have counted a necessary qualification for filling the position of his wife, so that she had her wits and could be lawfully wedded to him.

She was not too mad to understand the agony of his words. She trembled, and the colour came back faintly to her face and her eyes were full of trouble.

He knelt at her feet and took her hand and covered it with kisses. She drew it away, and said, bewildered, "This must not be. Do you not understand?"

"I only understand that I love you," he cried; "and if you cannot be my wife I will not live."

"Your wife! How can I be your wife?" she asked in a low voice, but still bewildered, not firmly.

"Cecilia! do you not love me? I thought you did. I hoped it—and if you do, by Heaven you shall be my wife, and I don't care if a thousand laws say you cannot!"

"It is all so strange," she murmured. "I don't know what the law would say. I have sometimes tried to think."

"Then you do love me," he interrupted, with triumphant joy at the admission, and he covered her hands with kisses again. "Say you love me! say it once!"

"Sometimes," she whispered, "I have been afraid lest I should—but it was impossible."

"Why?" he asked defiantly, convinced for the moment that there was no insanity to act as an impediment, but that there evidently was *something*, real or imaginary.

"In any case," she said, trying to smile, "there is the disparity in our ages. Most people would consider that enough."

Sir John was wounded. "I did not consider that to be an obstacle, but rather an advantage. People do not think twenty years' difference in age such a serious matter, and I do not feel quite patriarchal."

"Twenty years! but it is much more than that," she said, smiling mournfully. "It is a hundred and sixteen, and on the wrong side. It is not well that a wife should be so much the elder. But if that were all—" she sighed and shook her head. "Tell me—I know a man may not marry his grandmother—but how far back

does the law reach? May he marry his great-great-grandmother? Does not the relationship wear out?"

He could not answer: he knelt at her side, his face buried in his hands, bowed upon her knee.

"I never heard what the law was about such a relationship," she went on thoughtfully, stroking his hair. "I suppose the law assumes such a case as so unlikely to occur that it has not been taken into consideration. But it does not matter; we can go on living together as we do now all the same."

"That is impossible," he groaned. Then he rose and kissed her lips. He did not know whether she heard his words or not; he hoped not. It were useless to disturb her mind until the time came when it should be necessary, when he had found some plan as to what to do with her.

She did not return his kiss. She sat quite still, gazing at the fire which flickered and crackled so cheerily on the wide hearth. He leant against the mantelpiece, covering his face.

At last she spoke.

"Do you mean that you do not wish me to live here? It is a large house; there is room for me in it without putting you to inconvenience. Is it—that you wish to marry some one else—and that she might object to my presence as something much worse than a mother-in-law?"

"Never! I shall never marry, unless I marry you," he cried.

"Oh, how cruel you are, because you cannot have your way!" she wailed, wringing her hands.

"Cecilia, Cecilia!" He was at her feet again holding her hands in his. "Can you not understand? If you live here alone with me the world will say evil things; you cannot stay here except as my wife."

"And not because I am your great-great-great-grandmother," with a sad smile. "Yet it is my home—my only home. Where shall I go if you send me away? Not a home, not a corner in all the world can I claim except the grave. Ah! I have no right in the world, no place in it! My place has been long, long filled up! Why did I come back to it? There is no room in it for me!"

She was deathly cold. An awful shiver stole over Sir John. Was it possible that she could be no woman of flesh and blood, sane or mad, but a spirit come hither from the unseen world? Her flesh was firm to his touch, but it was like touching the dead.

"You are tired, Cecilia," he said at last, dismissing the wild thought with a shudder. "It is late; come, and I will give you your candle. What a night! You will not be afraid? Ridley or Margaret had better sleep in your room."

"No; I am not afraid. Good-night," and she rose slowly from her chair.

She took the silver candlestick; he kissed her ice-cold hand, and then watched her go slowly up the broad dark staircase, the candle-light shining on her bright hair and her jewels, her heavy gown clinging close to her, making no sound as she went. Then he shut himself into the library.

* * * * *

The wind roared and the snowstorm beat on the panes. He could not sleep on such a night. It was Christmas Eve; he would keep the vigil.

He sat over the fire trying to think it out.

Should he send her away, into some clever doctor's care, and marry her when she was cured? But what endless litigation such a marriage would lead to, when there was a title and a great estate in question, and when the bride might prove to be unfitted by birth for the position of mother to the future Ildertons of Chesterwood.

How strange that that old story should have taken such hold of her mind! How had she learnt those details of it? or had she mixed the events of her own life with the outlined story she had heard of Cecilia Ilderton? And where had she heard the story originally, since she knew it before coming to the place?

How wild the night grew! No chance of sleep to-night. How should he while the weary hours away? In all those old cabinets and bookcases surely he could find occupation to distract his mind from the storm and Cecilia—and from Cecilia, Lady Ilderton? Perhaps he could find some papers that would tell him something of the first Cecilia's history. He felt a deep personal interest in her.

The night passed on; the storm still raged wilder and wilder. Sir John had become so absorbed in his task that he neither heard the storm nor heeded how the time passed. Bundle after bundle of old papers he opened, glanced through, and tied up again—such yellow papers, such small faded writing! It was six o'clock on Christmas morning when he heard a clock strike, and then he knew the storm had abated, or he could not have heard the six clear strokes.

"Christmas Day!" he said to himself. "I have been up all night, like the 'bird of dawning that singeth all night long' and keeps ghosts from walking. They must not stir abroad on Christmas Eve."

Was it imagination, or was it the last breath of the dying storm? He thought he heard a long sigh close by him, and he became as cold as stone.

"What a fool I am!" he said to himself, and took up the next packet of letters.

They were inside a comparatively new cover, and as he read the inscription upon it he started and shivered, and looked uneasily round the room.

"Was it the Padre's ghost," he thought.

On the cover was written:

"These letters relate to the disappearance of Cecilia, Lady Ilderton, who was asserted to have been arrested for high treason and to have subsequently died in the Tower of London, in the winter of 1745. The letter signed Fr. Antonio Giannelli, S.J., Chaplain to Sir Francis Ilderton, of Chesterwood, baronet, was discovered in May, 1832, by Thomas Woolley, innkeeper, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, having been secreted in a crevice in the wall of one of the rooms of his inn—the 'Black Swan'—and was by him transferred to me in the same month. The letter was probably hidden there by the writer, on some rumour of pursuit, and his death at sea, while escaping from Shields to France, would occasion the delay of eighty-seven years that elapsed before the letter was found, during house repairs."

"JOHN FRANCIS ILDERTON."

Sir John took out the letters. There were four of them, yellow and faded like so many others he had read during the night. One was in a cramped

foreign hand, written in Italian and signed, "Fr. Antonio Giannelli."

With much trouble Sir John managed to decipher the letter, for the ink was faded so much that some words were missing altogether and the spelling was out of date.

It related that on January the 6th, 1745-6, about a week after the skirmish at Clifton, in which a portion of the Duke of Cumberland's army was defeated by the Highlanders under Prince Charles Edward, but in which Sir Francis Ilderton had been taken prisoner, though he had managed to escape, a report came to Chesterwood that a detachment of soldiers were on their way to search the house for Sir Francis who was supposed to be concealed there. Father Giannelli, who was the confessor of Sir Francis and Lady Ilderton, and also supposed to be an agent of the House of Stuart, was obliged to remain at Chesterwood to take care of the young wife and her child, and also to carry on the king's business with the disaffected Catholic gentlemen of Northumberland.

Lady Ilderton was fond of dabbling in the occult sciences, and Father Giannelli had encouraged and taught her much about what is now known as electro-biology, but which in those days was a newly-found force, its existence believed in by very few. On the night in question her nerves were much excited. She had recently gone through a great mental strain, and she was working herself into a fever, expecting the arrival of the Government soldiers. Father Giannelli, to amuse and distract her, was telling her strange stories of magnetic experiments that had been witnessed by him in Italy. He confessed now that he had another motive in keeping the conversation in this dangerous channel. He believed that, contrary to his advice, Sir Francis had entrusted her with some papers of importance that he wished to have in his own hands, being jealous of any entrenchment on his prerogative of being prime mover of the political springs in the North. If he could persuade her to be put by him into a magnetic sleep, he could at least acquaint himself of the fact whether she had those papers or not; perhaps even she could tell him what was in them; he might even be shown the papers, and she would never be any the wiser.

She not only consented to be mesmerised; she was eager for it. "The end justifies the means," the Jesuit said to himself when he found she was completely in his power, in that strange sleep that gives the spirit into another's keeping.

At the very moment when success was assured to him, there was a loud knocking at the door; a loud voice cried—

"In the King's name!"

Like so many of the old houses in those wild days, Chesterwood was full of hiding-places; one was behind the panel of this very room, communicating only with the room and very small, capable of holding only one person. Another was in the picture gallery, communicating also with the outside of the house.

Quick as thought he carried the unconscious Lady Ilderton to the secret place in this room: he did not wake her because it was safer for her to be quiet. He shut her in and fled for his life to the hidden chamber in the picture gallery, but before he reached it he was taken.

"Lady Ilderton is far beyond your reach," was all he would say in answer to their questioning. The servants, not finding her, believed she had escaped, and they were faithful. The soldiers took it for granted she had joined her husband. They could not arrest the baby, so they contented themselves by carrying off Father Giannelli.

He was uneasy about poor Lady Ilderton, but tried to reason his fears away. "Nobody ever died under mesmerism," he told himself. "She will waken up, and it will not take her long to understand where she is. She has only to scream to bring all the servants, and she understands the secret of the spring."

But when time went on and there was no news of her and Sir Francis had heard nothing of her, people began to say that she had escaped and had then been taken prisoner to the Tower. In those days communication between London and Northumberland was very scanty, and so many were taken to the Tower and other prisons and died in them. There was another possibility, that she might still lie in the secret chamber in that strange living death; and this letter was written to advise a search to be made. The writer believed that animation could be suspended by mesmerism for an indefinite period, and that though weeks had gone by, she might still be found in her living tomb.

A note by Sir John Francis Ilderton stated that search had been made, in 1832, when the letter came into his hands, but no secret chamber had been found. The story must hold good, in the face of these wild improbabilities, that Cecilia, Lady Ilderton, died in the Tower.

Sir John looked round the room, thrilled with horror in every pulse. Could it be possible that somewhere behind these oaken panels the real Cecilia lay dead, and that her spirit haunted the house, or that she had come forth alive from her strange sleep, like Lazarus from the grave?

But he remembered that the panels he saw were all new. The old decayed wood had been removed in the late repairs. Then had the workmen's tools given her liberty? She might have been lying out of sight, to be wakened by the light let in upon her, from her century and a half of sleep, and have crept out when no one was by.

Then he laughed at himself for his wild imaginings; for the daylight streamed into the room, and sounds began to awake in the quiet house.

He went to his room, and had an icy bath, which restored his nervous system. Then he went to breakfast.

He was interrupted by Mrs. Ridley, who came with a white face and scared eyes. "Sir John," she whispered, "I'm afraid something has happened to the poor young lady."

His heart died within him. He seemed to know all before he was told.

"We cannot find her anywhere. Her bed has not been slept in, but the dress and the jewels she wore last night are all in their places. We looked through all her drawers and closets to see if her walking things were there, and nothing is disturbed. All her clothes are there, but she is gone."

He rushed to her room. He knew what he sought for.

All the beautiful clothes he gave her were there, and the brown woollen dress he first saw

her in; everything but the faded, tattered silk dress in which she had been found.

A search was made far and wide; but the snow lay deep for weeks, and might have hidden a million secrets in its cold bosom. Sir John at last wondered if she had been a spirit after all.

Late in the spring, a shepherd's dog found something strange in a distant part of the moor, miles away from any human habitation—something that had been a woman.

There was nothing to recognise her by; her clothes had lost even shape and colour; of her dress nothing remained but a few thin rags.

But Sir John had the poor body brought home to Chesterwood, and buried beside his forefathers, caring nothing what any one said about it; and she who had had no place in all the world left to her, was at home and at rest at last.

And no one but Sir John knew why he laid her there.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

DUSK and darker grows the twilight o'er the dimly mist-clad meadows,
And in robe of angel pureness comes the swiftly falling snow.
All the land lies wrapt in silence till the dawn-light breaks the shadows.
While from many a village casement gleams the ruddy Yule-tide glow.

And the portals open slowly with the night-wind wailing shrilly,
As glad eager faces watch therefrom across the barren moor,
Lest if haply those belated, o'er the snow-drifts trudging chilly,
Should not see the welcome glinting from the dear old homestead door.

"They are late to-night," 'tis murmured in low accents gently tender,
By the good House Mother, knitting in the cheerful ingle side,
And to raise a flame still brighter from the Yule-log lightly bends her.
Oh! the hours but creep for meeting, and the world is all too wide.

Hush! the children whisper softly, then half dies their merry laughter.
Far above the cruel night-wind's voice there riseth, clear and sweet,
Forth a carol ringing changeful, as the firelight on the rafter,
Then it draweth, draweth nearer, with the sound of many feet.

CAROL SINGERS.

"Eve of the Heav'n-sent dawning,
Night that precedes the day!
The Christ-child comes in the morning
And shadows shall flee away.

Comes He in guise all lowly,
Yet by the manger door,
Angels their watch keep holy,
Kneeling in wondrous awe."

Forward go ye, carol singers, to the hearts now worn and weary,

Aye, it may be that the Master hath a message sent to night;

And it may be thus the angels sang of erst, on eve as dreary,

To a sad world lying watchful for the Golden City's Light.

"Peace to the children sleeping
Peace and goodwill to earth,
Past is the time of weeping,
Joy hath illumined His birth."

Lonely souls, to whom no others beat harmonious unison,

Hear, and heeding, muse ye gladly of the love past mortal ken.

Let your voices raise full tuneful, echoes born of songs Elysian,

Of the holy Christmas angels, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

CAROL SINGERS IN THE DISTANCE.

"Eve of the Heav'n-sent dawning,
Night that precedes the day,
The Christ-child comes in the morning
And shadows shall flee away."

FRANCES HURRELL

MRS. MEREDITH'S CHRISTMAS.

BY R.E. HENRY.

ADRAWING-ROOM brilliantly lighted, and furnished with all the luxury that taste could devise or money purchase. Costly curtains of dark green shot with gold were drawn across the large windows, but these could not keep out the howling of the wintry blast as it swept down the street. The room was utterly silent, for its occupant lay back among the soft cushions of an easy-chair, wrapt in thought. She might have seemed asleep, save for the slow mechanical movement of a large feather screen which she held between her face and the blazing fire. A woman young and wonderfully lovely, largely moulded, with swelling bust and rounded arms; her dark lustrous eyes were veiled by the long thick lashes as she gazed dreamily into the glowing embers; her complexion was not fair, but soft in texture, and blooming as a ripe peach. A woman of twenty-five, with whom time and fortune had dealt leniently. Not prone to, perhaps not capable of, much deep feeling, or even at that early age the brow would not have been so perfectly smooth and unruffled. She was dressed in mourning, that becoming mourning in which white and delicate grey, relieve the solemn black, and from head to foot there was not a point which her careful maid had failed to make the best of. A contented, well-fed, well-dressed woman, she lay dreaming or thinking lazily, until the door opened and her husband entered. Then she moved slightly, drew back the train of her dress with one hand, and paused to watch the effect as it fell into fresh folds.

Mr. Meredith drew his chair near his wife's and spread his hands towards the sparkling blaze—

a man of fifty or thereabout, a barrister renowned for his dry caustic wit and cutting phrases; a slight man with a thin refined face and dark piercing eyes. His scanty hair was fast turning grey, and the small black moustache was perhaps accountable to the dye pot for its intense hue; the rest of the face was closely shaven, giving a peculiarly hollow appearance to the thin cheeks. No one, to look at Eustace Meredith, would have accused him of sensuousness; and yet there was hardly a gratification he had ever denied himself. His marriage had been the result of a desperate fancy for a woman far below him in station, but, to do him justice, after five years he still found her beautiful, and bestowed upon her a half contemptuous admiration and careless sort of affection which were as much as he thought any woman worthy of. But if he were chary of respect and homage, he gave what his wife valued far more—lovely raiment, sparkling gems—and took her into society which in her girlhood's wildest dreams she had never thought to enter. For Eustace Meredith was rich and well esteemed. He had inherited a small fortune on his father's death, but he loved his profession too much to throw it over, now that it was no longer a necessity for him. Indeed, it was the only thing he really loved; his heart and soul were in his work. His wife was to him a pretty toy; so long as she pleased his eye and ear it was enough. He had seen her first in her country home, the daughter of a small Suffolk farmer. Not an atom of pretence, not an ounce of gentility among any of her people. The father worked hard with his hands, and had not an idea beyond beet and mangold-wurzel. The mother was an upright, stern-featured woman who took life earnestly and seriously, and tried to bring up her three daughters to be as hard-working and God-fearing as she was herself.

Seeing the stock of which she came, it was strange that Elizabeth Morrison should have listened so readily to the pleading of the unknown gentleman who was staying in the neighbourhood for rest and change. It was stranger still that she should have granted him stolen interviews; but perhaps strangest of all was it that the girl, having gone so far, would budge not one step farther. Not all Meredith's power of pleading could induce her to leave her home except as his wife. To the secrecy of the marriage she agreed readily, for she did not wish him to forfeit his inheritance for her sake. So Meredith formed and carried out the strange project of marrying the girl secretly, and sending her to a French boarding school for a year, to be educated. The year merged into two before he brought her away, and then, though she was her own mistress, and installed in comfortable apartments, she found life not too gay. Her husband was constantly with his father, whose failing health made him exacting of his son's companionship. At last, nearly five years after the marriage, the old man died, and then began a new phase of existence for Mrs. Meredith. She was taken to a well-appointed house and made nominally the mistress of it. Nominally! for Eustace was much too fastidious to trust her inexperience; therefore he chose a housekeeper and cook, who managed everything to suit him. Even her maid had her orders from the master with regard to her mistress's toilette.

But these things did not worry Elizabeth. On the contrary, she was very glad to be spared the trouble; for not all her Paris education had taught her the construction of a menu or the arrangement of furniture.

This evening everything had been completely to Mr. Meredith's taste, and he looked serene as he sat before the comfortable blaze.

"Lizzie, my father has been dead seven months. There could be no impropriety in our entertaining a little during the misnamed festive season. A dinner to a dozen intimate friends could hardly make Christmas drearier than it always is; and it is so long since we have shown any one hospitality."

"Oh, Eustace!"

"What's the matter? You shall have no trouble, I promise you. Your rôle will be to look pretty, not to outshine any of the women in the matter of dress and diamonds; and to talk pleasing inanities to the men. I don't think you will find the part difficult to play."

"It is not that. But I was going to ask you a favour, a great big favour. Eustace, you promised once that some day I should go down to Suffolk and see my own people once more, and I thought—I hoped—that perhaps this Christmas, now that our marriage is a secret no longer. You know I have not seen or heard anything of them for five years."

"My dear child, have you properly considered the horrors you are preparing for yourself? Do you remember what the country is like in mid-winter? Have you thought of the food you will be expected to partake of—pickled pork, pudding at the beginning of dinner? Oh, Elizabeth, have you thought of pudding at the beginning of dinner?"

"You know, Eustace, I care nothing about eating."

"Do not remind me of my misfortunes, my failure. I have tried to educate your taste, but beyond a liking for ices and bon-bons, you are absolutely ignorant. A curried lobster means no more to you than a Yarmouth bloater, and I have seen you eat a riz-de-veau aux truffes with as vacant an expression on your face as if you were munching an Osborne biscuit. No, the art of dining is a sealed book to you."

"Eustace, you have not told me yet if I may go home. Remember how I left, without one word of explanation. They do not know, up to this moment, what has become of me. Think how lovely it will be to tell them of my good luck. Think how surprised they will be to see me in my present circumstances, and to learn all about you."

"My dear child, you are not going to propose that I shall accompany you?" he asked, with an alarmed expression. "Go, and take my blessing to the worthy people, but don't say that my presence is necessary to your happiness."

"Oh, no! I shall feel happier without you," she said, ingenuously. "Fancy how much I shall have to explain, to talk about!"

"But why is it necessary you should go just at Christmas time?"

"Well, you see, Eustace, it seems nicer that it should be an anniversary, a festivity—my home-coming. Then there will be the going to church."

"I understand. All the neighbours, far and

near, will see you in your bravery, and will open their mouths and gape in wonder and admiration at the fine lady who was once 'our Lisbeth!'"

"I wonder what Hepzibah will say. She was six years older than me—than I am. How she used to lecture, worse than ever mother did! Oh, she was a prude! But she can't lecture me now. And little Mattie; I wonder if she's grown as pretty—"

"As pretty as you, Vanity?"

"No, I was going to say, as pretty as she bade fair to be, but I didn't know if you would like the expression."

"It has rather an old-nursery twang. Say rather, 'She was an embryo beauty,' or 'The classic outlines of her features gave promise of maturing into rare loveliness.' Well, we will consider the affair settled. You are to seek the parental blessing in the home of your childhood; while I, a lonely bachelor, shall fly for consolation to Paris."

"And how long may I stay?"

"Do not hurry yourself, my child. Paris is at her gayest at the New Year."

Elizabeth was not sensitive enough to feel hurt at her husband's words or manner. She was genuinely happy at the prospect of being once more with her own kith and kin. It was very fine, very satisfactory to have a big house and grand clothes. She felt extremely important as she stepped into her carriage, but her life was not lively. She had nothing in common with any of the people with whom she came in contact. Her husband rather overpowered her. With the women who called on her she was ill at ease, lest she should, by word or gesture, betray her want of breeding. Of her servants she stood in considerable awe. But in her native village she would be a queen. Her parents would receive her with open arms; and if the fatted calf was killed for the prodigal son, what would not be done for the daughter, who, instead of wasting her substance, had so enriched herself that some of the reflected glory must needs shine upon the homestead which gave her birth?

So ran Mrs. Meredith's dream as she put together the few things necessary for her journey.

What a difficult selection it was to make! She rejected all her fine dresses as useless; yet she must needs take her Russian furs to protect her during the journey. Her diamond bracelets and throatlet would not be needed, yet she put an extra ring or two on her already well-adorned fingers. Her French maid gesticulated violently. She was wild with curiosity, and indignant at being left behind. Mr. Meredith silenced her. Madame was going to visit some poor relations; a maid, or much luggage, would be out of place.

Bien! if Monsieur was satisfied, there was nothing further to be said.

She would have wondered still more if she had seen the strange parcels which Madame smuggled into the trunk when her back was turned. A packet of strong tobacco, a warm shawl of sombre hue, some coarse linsey suitable for dresses.

"How poor such presents seem when I have so much!" mused Mrs. Meredith; "but it's no use to annoy mother by giving her or the girls finery."

At last all her preparations were completed. Mr. Meredith saw his wife and her belongings

safely into a comfortable first-class compartment, ordered a foot-warmer for her, and actually remained on the platform, though it was bitterly cold, until the train started. Then for his good deeds he considered himself entitled to a holiday on the Continent, as long as his wife remained away, or it might be a little longer.

And Elizabeth was borne swiftly along through the cold wintry sunshine, feeling strangely excited and anxious now that the journey was really begun. How impatiently she watched for some sign that she was nearing home! How she gazed out upon the bleak landscape when it began to grow familiar to her! How slowly the train seemed to move; and when at last her destination was reached she almost fancied it was all a dream, and she should wake up in her grand bedroom in Grosvenor Street.

She was the only passenger who alighted, and the sleepy little station with its flickering oil lamps seemed as if it opened one eye lazily to gaze at her and then slumbered again; the train steamed away into the darkness, and Elizabeth Meredith stood amazed and helpless, while a porter busied himself with her luggage. There was no vehicle to be obtained, so she set out to walk, having ordered her trunk to be sent on by the carrier. She knew every step of the road; that it was over three miles, and that darkness was coming on apace, mattered nothing to her; she felt as safe as in her mother's chimney corner. Her step involuntarily quickened from very excitement as she passed one after the other each familiar landmark. There was Farmer Wilson's cottage, there was the field where the big black bull had once frightened them all as children, there was the stile where she and Willie Lawrence used to meet. Poor Willie! her lover during his boyhood and early manhood; how he had loved her, and she had left him without a word. How tender and true and loving she used to feel when he had his arms about her and his lips on her cheek! How often they had pictured what their home was to be like, and how they would cling to each other through storm and sunshine! Poor Willie! no one else had ever breathed such passion into her ear. No one but he had ever picked up the stones she trod on and kissed them with mad fervour. And yet she had the heart to desert him with hardly another thought, the moment she found that Eustace Meredith meant to make her his wife. How would Willie act if he were in church to-morrow morning? Would he look angrily away, and if she glided up and put her gloved hand into his, and asked him to forgive her, would he have the heart to refuse? It would be nice to be friends and to know he bore no malice.

Such thoughts as these filled her mind till the old home was actually in sight. Then her impatience fairly got the better of her, and lifting up her skirts she ran as fleetly as she had ever done in her girlhood. There was no one in sight. Perhaps they had done work for the day, and were gathered about the kitchen fire. She crept softly round the corner of the house. The door was open, and as she stood in the shadow she could hear voices, though she could not see the speakers.

"It's time mother come in out of the fog and damp. She's none so young that she can play tricks with herself."

It was Hepzibah who spoke, and Mattie answered her.

"You try and get her to take any heed. You know what she always was."

"Well, I must be going. My man and the young un'll be looking out for me."

Then Hepzibah was a wife, and not only that, but a mother. Already the glory of the home-coming was dimmed.

"That boy grows rarely, Mattie. He gets the very pictur' of father."

"Poor father! How he'd have taken to a child o' yours, Hepzibah, if he'd lived to see him."

Then her father was dead. How much she was learning in these brief moments!

"Well, don't let's get talking; it gives me the mopes," said Hepzibah; "and Christmas ought to be jolly. Ah, here's mother!"

An outer door creaked, and then there was a firm, heavy footfall upon the bricked floor.

"You here, Hepzibah!"

"Yes, mother; I just ran over to give you a 'merry Christmas.' I wish you and Mattie 'ud come and eat your dinner with us to-morrow. Dan'l would be rarely pleased, and the boy 'ud liven you up a bit."

"You mean well, Hepzibah, and I'm thankful to you; but I've seen the last of my merry Christmases. I've just got to live through 'em each one now till it pleases the Lord to take me. If ever you had a child that brought shame to you and that killed her father, you'd know a bit how I feel."

Shame! Elizabeth could bear it no longer. There was a rustle of rich garments, and suddenly the humble little kitchen witnessed the strangest sight—a woman, fashionably dressed and lovely, holding out her arms, and trying to cling to that stern, upright, unbending figure with the iron-grey hair and hard-shut mouth.

"Mother, don't you know me?"

"Yes, I know you. You are Elizabeth, my second-born child. And when your father grieved that you were a girl, I said, 'Bless the little one; she may turn out your joy and pride after all.'

"And so I should have been if he'd lived to see this day. Mother, why do you look at me so strangely? I am a wife—have been from the time I left your roof. My husband had to keep his marriage a secret, or his father would have disinherited him—left all his money to a distant cousin. But now the old man is dead, and I am mistress of the house, and known to everyone as Mrs. Eustace Meredith."

Her words produced an evident effect upon her younger listeners.

"It's well to be you," Mattie said.

"You were always a lucky one," said Hepzibah.

"For shame, Hepzibah! You've got an honest husband, a man that wasn't afraid to come and ask you of your parents. You had no call to steal out of your home and leave your name to be tossed about like any common wench's."

"You forget, mother," said Elizabeth, humbly, "how much Mr. Everard was above me. I had to learn, oh! so many things, before I was fit for my position."

"You were best, to my mind, when you hadn't learnt them. You learned to be deceitful and sly and greedy; to take money that wasn't by rights yours. It was only by living a lie your

husband got his wealth; do you think there'll be a blessing on such ill-gotten gains? Your children 'll be a reproach to you."

"I have no children," said Elizabeth, tearfully.

"Best so," said the old woman, "best so. You were an undutiful child; you broke your father's heart."

"Oh, mother, don't say that!"

"It's truth, Elizabeth Meredith. He were heavy with the disgrace of your flight till the day of his death."

"There was no disgrace," Mrs. Meredith said, sullenly.

"Not in the way, perhaps, that most folk mean. But it 'ud hardly have been worse for me if I'd known you'd sinned through love, that a woman's tender loving heart had led you astray, than to learn how you let the man buy you with his gold. For you've said no word of affection for your husband, girl."

"He is very kind to me; he takes me everywhere. He gives me all I want."

"Well, then, go back to him and to your grand home, mayhap he's wearying for you now," she said, scornfully, with a mother's keen intuition as to the real state of the case. "There's no place for you here. Your elder sister's happily married, and please God I shall see Mattie an honest man's wife before I die."

"Do you turn me out of your house, mother?"

"If you'd come here for shelter, if you were poor and in want, I'd ha' given you a home. But if you've come to show off your gewgaws and gimcracks, then I say you're best away, Elizabeth Meredith. You'll not find yourself so welcome in these parts. Do you think the Widow Lawrence wants to see you? You that drove her son mad with your pranks."

"Mad! Willie mad!"

"Yes, mad with drink. There wasn't a better or a steadier lad than Willie, and now it's drink, drink, drink, morning, noon, and night. You wouldn't care to see him, I'm thinking, and it's best you shouldn't meet."

"I will go back to London," said Mrs. Meredith, mournfully. "I never knew, I never thought of the harm I'd done. Good-bye, mother. You'll kiss me, and you'll let the girls kiss me just this once. Good-bye."

And she walked unsteadily, through blinding tears, out of the little kitchen, out of her home, out into the dreary December night.

How altered, how cheerless everything looked! She felt afraid now of the darkness, afraid of every shadow, and when a drunken man reeled out of the hedge and accosted her, she screamed aloud in terror.

"Lizzie, by—"

A hand was at her throat, fiery eyes were looking into hers, hot, burning breath was on her cheek.

"I swore I'd kill you, I swore it, and I will, I will!"

* * * * *

"Do you think it's true? Oh, mother, do you think it's true?"

Mrs. Morrison and her youngest daughter were hurrying along, bonnetless, cloakless, through the darkness and piercing cold. For Willie Lawrence had rushed into the kitchen half an hour after Mrs. Meredith's departure, wild with drink and

passion, and had told the mother that her girl was lying in a ditch, dead—strangled by his hand. And then, with a shrill, maniacal laugh, he had turned and fled.

The old woman did not answer Mattie's question. They hurried along on different sides of the road, straining their eyes, and almost holding their breath, in listening for a sound.

"She is here!"

It was the mother who found her, with all her pretty garments dragged and torn, her hair dishevelled, and the marks of cruel fingers at her throat. It was the mother who, despite her sixty years, carried her child as she had often carried her in her babyhood, the helpless head, helpless as in infancy, against her breast.

They lay her on the little bed in the room where she had pictured herself sleeping that night; but she was all-unconscious of the care and love lavished on her. She knew nothing of the mother's tears and self-reproach. But their vigils and prayers and tenderness had effect. Elizabeth awoke at last to consciousness, and knew she was in her mother's home, and that her sin was forgiven. And in the long hours of convalescence mother and daughter wept and prayed together, and grew nearer to each other's hearts than they had ever been before.

Mr. Meredith did not hear of his wife's illness till she was far on the road to recovery, and then he contented himself with writing and receiving frequent accounts, for both felt he was better away. His name was seldom mentioned, but they talked often of the man who had loved her so, and whose body was found in the river bed the morning of that first Christmas which Mrs. Meredith spent in her old home.

DECEMBER.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

"The mellow year is hastening to its close,
The little birds have almost sung their last;
Their small notes twitter in the dreary blast—
That shrill-piped harbinger of early snows.
The russet leaves obstruct the straggling way
Of oozy brooks, which no deep banks define;
And the gaunt woods, in ragged scant array,
Wrap their old limbs with sombre ivy twine."

KING Winter's hoary herald proclaims that the monarch is approaching with rapid strides, and admonishes us to lose no time in making preparations for his reception. It by no means follows, however, that we enter upon winter when December begins, nor is it a universal rule that when November's storms have blown off the rigours of the cold season begin. It frequently happens that the wind will blow from the south during a great part of this month, and so we drift into winter, in spite of the short days and cloudy skies, quite gradually.

Still "gloomy December," as Burns calls it, comes as a happy time to most of us, in spite of the chilling influences with which it is surrounded. It is emphatically the month for home enjoyments. The season of Christmas comes as the gladdest time of all the year; to the young especially it is synonymous with feasting and merry-

making; and their elders try to cast off the cares that oppress them, and are happy in seeing their children happy around them.

The fact is Winter is a great bully, and consequently attacks only those who are least able to cope with him. He has no delicacy of feeling, but delights in making the poor man feel his poverty, the weak his frailty, and he exercises a terrible tyranny over poor old nature generally. To those who do honour to his approach by paying attention to the quality and quantity of their apparel, he will not exhibit an unkindly disposition; but will assume a freezing demeanour towards those who are forgetful of this important piece of etiquette. It being well known that he cannot "stand fire" and that he has a most snobbish respect for people who are well clothed, dives piles on the coals and provides himself with handsome well-lined clothing, while poor Lazarus, having no coals nor the wherewithal to obtain them, looks at his threadbare coat and trembles at his approach, knowing that he will meet with but scant pity. Now is the time for philanthropy to unlock its stores, and pour them out with no niggard hand upon the widow and orphan, the poor and helpless.

On a mild quiet day, particularly if there be a little sunshine, there is yet a pleasure in wandering through the woods, ankle deep in fallen leaves and listen to the farewell notes of the few birds that are left. Everything seems so changed it is hard to believe it to be the same place where but a short time ago we revelled in the glory of its summer beauty. The oaks and a few of the other trees have not yet parted with all their leaves, though to be sure they make but a ragged and forlorn appearance. As the tall trees stretch their bare arms supplicatingly towards the sky, you may fancy they are passionately bemoaning their lost treasures. Now is the time when you may get a good view of the structure of these large trees which you cannot do when they are covered with leaves. As we stand here rather in shadow, and look upwards, we can see the delicate tracing of the topmost boughs against the sky. Each large bough having many branchlets, with yet smaller twigs radiating in every direction terminates in a single line. All are separate and distinct and almost as beautiful as when clothed in the fulness of their summer glory.

The only foliage to be seen now is of a very minute kind. The mosses and lichens, which flourish most in the depths of winter, are now beginning to sprout and cover the great bolls of the beeches and other large trees, as well as the surface of stones, and roots of trees with charming colours in brown, green, olive, purple, and grey. Some of these minute forests are of the most exquisite beauty, and they most fortunately flourish and add the charm of their vivid colours to deck with new beauties the wood at a time when it is most bare.

As we continue our walk we cannot but notice with what startling force every little sound strikes upon the ear; the chafing of the smallest twigs against each other, the fluttering of the smallest bird, even the falling of a withered leaf, all are distinctly audible. You may indeed often hear the ticking of your watch in your pocket during a stroll in the woods on a winter's day. This is partly due no doubt to the clearness of the atmos-

phere; it arises in part also from the almost complete absence of all insect life, which in summer keeps up an indefinable humming sound, all-pervading and incessant.

With few exceptions the insects are now all dead or hibernating. The bees are in their snug winter quarters, living on the proceeds of their industry while the weather keeps mild, and going to sleep when the weather is very cold. The wasps that are not already dead are reaping the harvest of their idleness and gluttony; hiding in their holes in a half-torpid state, where the greater part will die with cold before the warm spring weather comes to set them free to plunder again. As for the flies, the cold has played sad havoc with them. In addition they are subject to be attacked by a kind of fungoid growth, which is generated in their own bodies, and this soon kills off all that have survived the first cold. You may see them on old walls and windows, and on the leaves of evergreens, stuck fast by what looks like a greyish looking web; this is the destructive fungus which kills them by millions.

If the weather be mild the skylark still soars and sings, and the note of the woodlark may yet be frequently heard; and so long as the sky is clear without frost, the thrush will sing a short song from the top of some lofty tree. Flocks of greenfinches are flying about, occasionally giving utterance to their irritating, long-drawn swe-e-e-t, and the cheery pink-pink of the chaffinch as he hops among the lower boughs may be frequently heard.

The rabbits have had a lively time of it for the last three months, in avoiding guns, snares, ferrets, and other modes of destruction devised by their natural enemy man. They have been so harassed, and chevied, and their lives made so generally miserable, that it is not to be wondered they are not so tame as they were in the summer. Yet, if you place your back to a tree and stand perfectly still, scarcely daring to wink, it is wonderful how close they will come to you. They will sit on their haunches and sniff with that peculiar twitching of the nostrils, their eyes fixed on yours; but the slightest movement will send them scurrying to their burrows into which they disappear in a flash of white fur.

In the centre of the wood there is some low ground which at this season is always wet and marshy, from thin a little rivulet runs to the margin of the wood. There is a good deal of underwood growing close by, and here we flush a woodcock, which goes whirling away like an arrow, vanishing in a moment or two out of sight by a sudden dip in the wood.

As we get to the margin the sun is sinking to the horizon, and gleams out redly at the moment of his farewell. The rooks are returning to the wood in great flocks, and settling down with a great deal of cawing, comparing notes probably as to the result of the day's excursion in the neighbouring lands. There is a bleating of sheep in some far-off fold, and the barking of dog which is repeated again and again by the echoing hills. At this season the twilight is short, and soon the shadows of night will descend upon the trees which stand silent and motionless.

But every one is preparing now for the great festival of the year. Large round puddings, speckled and firm as cannon-balls, and huge jars

of mince-meat are preparing. Hectacoms of beef, millions of geese and turkeys, not to mention game and other fowl, are being slaughtered. The whole nation is going to mark its sense of the joyous time by feasting and revelling. Huge waggonns piled on high with holly and mistletoe are daily, nay almost hourly, coming to the London markets. Let us not forget the gladsome custom of decorating our homes with the gay holly, its shiny leaves and coral berries will reflect the light like tiny mirrors; and above and beyond all do not forget a great branch of mistletoe with its pretty pearls to hang high in hall.

We now stand upon the brink of the Old Year's grave, and soon 1885 will be gathered to his father's. May the New Year that is coming find each of us both wiser and better for the experiences of the one that is passing away. To one and all of our readers we wish most heartily,

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

WAS HE A FOOL?

BY EVELYN FLETCHER.

CHAPTER I.

HE may be handsome, but he is certainly a fool!"

Such was the pitiless judgment passed upon Tom Marston as he left a certain drawing-room, on a certain fine day in July, 1880.

He had been paying an afternoon call, that duty—awful to the young and strong—that the social laws of our country impose upon us; and he had looked all the time as if he didn't like it. An unpardonable offence in the eyes of the girl who, for the last half hour, had been doing her best to entertain him. I, sitting unobserved behind the window-curtains, ostensibly occupied with my French grammar, noted this. It was hard on Constance, certainly, and she had tried all sorts of subjects to draw him out—subjects, many of them, of which she knew absolutely nothing, but all to no purpose. It was not that he didn't answer, he invariably answered, but never without that dreadfully bored expression that made it so difficult for any one to believe his mother's protestations when she declared that "Tom loved calling!"

Was he a fool; or was Connie judging him harshly, moved thereto by his manifest indifference to her attentions?

I, from my post of observation behind the curtains, was inclined to think the latter; but then I had suffered myself from Connie's harsh judgments, and was pleased to fancy I might have the gratification of beholding a fellow sufferer. This may not be an amiable trait in poor human nature, but it is undoubtedly a common one, and one that the student of—Here my Aunt's voice interrupted my meditations.

"Flora, it is time you went to the schoolroom. Make haste, or you will have no drawing to-day." So I gather up my books and depart.

Miss Mills, my governess, is old, and wears a front of short, dust coloured curls; this front can hardly be called a deception, so absurdly transparent is its attempt to imitate nature that the most obtuse must see through it at once, and as it is rarely put on straight, it would seem that Miss Mills herself favours the joke, and has no thought in wearing it beyond that of affording a moment's amusement to the casual spectator. However that may be, there is Miss Mills when I enter the schoolroom, and flinging down my books, exclaim eagerly—

"Mills, dear; they have called. Mrs. Marston, and her son! Wasn't he bored, too, poor fellow; though Connie did her best to amuse him, and really 'came out strong,' " and Miss Mills, who, despite her years, is a woman still, does not attempt to check this outburst of eloquence, but rather encourages me to proceed. Curiosity—a curiosity arising solely from a kindly interest in her neighbours' welfare—is her ruling passion, and we have both felt an unusual degree of interest in these new-comers of whom no one in the place, not even the vicar, seems to know anything. They have been here a month now, but till this afternoon we have neither of us so much as seen them afar off, and they were out when Aunt Constance called, so we have not even enjoyed the doubtful satisfaction of hearing her report, bare and uninteresting though it would probably have been.

Many are the questions Miss Mills now puts to me, and I have to rack my brains to satisfy her on all points, and frequently am reduced to draw on my imagination rather than disappoint her. Mrs. Marston is, on the whole, the more important person in her eyes; while I freely confess I was more interested in her son; and my mind had been much less occupied with the little details of her toilet, than with the great question "was he really a fool, or only one of those rare wise men who are clever enough to make a good imitation of one?" This doubt perplexed me all through the evening, constantly coming between my mind's eye, and the page which I ought to have been studying; it was present with me when I retired to the privacy of my own small apartment, and haunted me through the earlier watches of the night with a patient perseverance worthy of a better cause. But when I woke in the bright hours of the early morning I had forgotten all about it, and started for a walk before breakfast, without one thought of Mr. Marston, or the amount of brains he might be fortunate enough to possess.

It certainly was a glorious morning? The dew was yet sparkling on field and hedge as I passed along; the green corn, stirred up by every breath of air, waved around me; wild roses loaded the air with their perfume; and a lark, mad with joy, sang unceasingly overhead, as he ascended ever nearer to the sun. On reaching the stile that separated my uncle's fields from a green lane that lay beyond, I sat down to rest, and admire the prospect more at my ease. The stile was a high one, and the view I commanded from its summit extensive. Looking back the way I had come, I could see the cornfields, bright with the vivid red of poppies, here basking in the golden sunlight, there dark with rippling shadows cast from the little fleecy clouds overhead. Beyond, I

could see a glimmer of many-tinted flowers through the thick belt of trees that shut in my uncle's house and garden, and beyond that again rose high, heathy hills, dark purple against the blue sky. A pretty country, truly, and a pleasant, and I turned to look down the lane, deliciously cool and green, between its deep banks, and shadowed by its overhanging trees.

A man was coming slowly up the lane.

A man, and—yes, a gentleman? It needed no second glance to show me that.

In all my experience of that green lane, I never remembered to have seen such a thing before.

I looked again.

The stranger was young and tall; he carried himself well, and as though he thought himself well worth the trouble. Also something about him seemed to imply that there were not many things he would think worth any trouble.

I knew him now—Mr. Marston!

My impulse was to jump down from the stile over which he must pass if he intended to continue his walk. My second, to stay quietly where I was, and see what he would do.

The first, was prompted by a mistaken impulse of politeness; the second, by feminine curiosity, pure and simple.

He approached slowly, lost in thought, apparently, and in rapt admiration of his boots; I examined him narrowly, as he came up; good looking, certainly, and that in no ordinary degree; hair and moustache of a dark rich brown, and eyes—he raised them suddenly, and I became absorbed in placid contemplation of the distant view.

Apparently he had not noticed me before, for I observed that he started, and paused for a moment as though uncertain whether to proceed, whereat I experienced a sensation of considerable disappointment. Then he thought better of it, and approaching me with a gracious smile, inquired if I could tell him which was the short cut to Gurtion.

"They told me to take this lane," he continued, in a somewhat aggrieved manner, "but apparently it leads nowhere. Indeed that appears to be a pleasing peculiarity of all lanes in this part of the country."

"Do you think so?" I replied, entirely ignoring his question in my desire to have a little cheerful conversation on my own account. "Oh, but that's only because you don't know your way about them yet! When you have lived here as long as I have, you'll know all the short cuts well enough."

He smiled a little; "And how long may that be?" he asked; "you speak as though you were the oldest inhabitant at least? I am fortunate to have met a lady of so much experience to direct my faltering steps."

"I have lived here nearly all my life," I said, "so I ought to know the country pretty well. It's lovely country when you do know it, but of course you're only a stranger here at present."

"Only a stranger?" What cruel scorn you express in those few words? Then you think this sort of thing," waving his hand vaguely in the direction of the hills, "must be known in order to be appreciated?"

"Of course; otherwise it wouldn't be worth knowing at all."

"I should very much like to know you!" he exclaimed, somewhat irrelevantly, leaning lazily on the gate beside my stile; "I thought we had called on everybody now, yet I'm sure I have never seen you before. Have I?" he added, after a pause, as I made no answer.

I laughed: "The doubt that question implies is not very complimentary to poor me. Who knows? You may yet live to enjoy the blessing of my acquaintance in the remote future. It's a good thing to have something to look forward to, isn't it, Mr. Marston?"

"I see you have the advantage of me," he remarked at once. "How do you know me?"

"I don't exactly know *you*—at least we've not been introduced, and all that, and I'm not 'out' yet;" with a somewhat mixed and misty impression of the customary rites of society. "But I know your name well enough; everybody in the place knows all about you by this time."

"Do they, indeed?" murmured the happy object of so much neighbourly interest, looking up at me with a faintly amused smile. "How very refreshing! I declare I feel quite gratified now I come to think of it. Picture to yourself Hedges discussing your merits with his beans and bacon, and Betty and Jane pulling you to pieces as they wring out the clothes. Charming idea, isn't it?"

"Oh, but there's nothing personal in it! They would do just as much for anyone else who had happened to take Moor Lodge," I hastened to explain. "In a quiet little place like this everything is interesting, and everybody of importance."

"Thank you," he said, laughing outright; "you flatter me. You have a very straight way of putting a thing, and no mistake. Not a bit like most of the girls one meets out!"

"Ah, but you see I'm not 'out'!" I returned, promptly. "Or I should, of course, be just like all the rest. Now I just amuse myself, and don't bother about things."

"What things?" Your definition is a trifle vague;" and Mr. Marston looked at me inquiringly.

"Why—don't you see—if I was 'out' it wouldn't do for me to go roaming about the country with no hat or gloves, as I'm doing now; or sit on stiles, and talk to all sorts of people, as—" I paused, but he was equal to the occasion.

"As you're doing now? Well, perhaps not. Under these circumstances you must forgive me if I say I'm very glad you're not 'out.' Selfish of me, isn't it?"

"Oh, but I don't want to be 'out';" I cried. "At least, not often. I'm much jollier as I am. Constance never has half the fun I have; she's always bothering about what people will think! As if people would ever take the trouble to think anything about us! It's all self-consciousness and nonsense!"

"Constance?" said Mr. Marston quickly: "Isn't that Miss Spencer's name? The people who live at the white house over there."

"Yes, The Grange. Constance is my cousin."

"And you live there?"

"I have given them the benefit of my society ever since I was five years old; I am now seventeen, and they yet live to tell the tale of my youthful transgressions. After that it seems

superfluous to mention that we Spencers are a very tough race. My name is Flora; uncle would call me 'Flo' for short, but aunt won't let him. She 'does not approve of nicknames,' she says. There are a good many things of which aunt does not approve. I'm one of them, strange though it may appear to you. My father is in India, and has been there for years. I'm 'all the daughters of my father's house, and all the brothers too!' Is there anything else you would like to know about me, Mr. Marston?"

"I can't think of anything just at present," he answered, quietly; "after the very comprehensive little autobiography you have been good enough to give me. I remember now that I must have seen you before. Was there not a studious young person in white, with yellow hair, behind the curtains in the drawing-room yesterday afternoon? Ah, I thought so! What were you reading so hard?"

"Only conjugating the verb 'être, to be,' and a horrid bother it was, too! But how could you see me? I flattered myself I was invisible."

"So you were from the room, but I had just a glimpse of you as we were going away. Like Sam Weller's valentine, it was just enough to make me wish for more."

"It must have been a very small glimpse indeed, then," I laughed. "What a pity you met me to-day, and so spoilt your pleasing first impression."

"I don't think so." He spoke so seriously that I looked at him in surprise. "What's the matter?" he added, quickly.

"Oh, nothing. Can you tell me what the time is?" I don't know what prompted me to change the subject so abruptly.

He looked at his watch, and I looked pensively at the sky.

"A little after nine," he said: whereat I descended hastily to earth again.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, springing to the ground. "And we are supposed to breakfast at nine sharp! Shan't I catch it!"

"Must you go?"

Mr. Marston had evidently broken his fast before he came out.

"Of course I must. Why, I'm positively starving! and aunt will be so cross as it is."

"Then she won't be much worse if you wait just half-a-minute to tell me the best way to Gurton. Is there a short cut through these fields?"

"To be sure there is," I said, hastily; "right past our house, and through the little wood beyond. You can't mistake it. But the high road would be your best way from Moor Lodge."

"Isn't this a public road?" he inquired, pausing, his foot on the stile.

"Oh, yes; there is a right-of-way through these fields; but people hardly ever avail themselves of it."

"I think it will be my best way," he said, "even from Moor Lodge;" which was quite a mistake, as anyone who knew the country could have told him. However, I hadn't time to explain all that to him then, so I merely nodded in a friendly way, and said—

"Good-bye! I really must go now. I can't wait for you, for I'm going to run all the way."

"Won't you shake hands with me, if you must?"

leave a fellow so unceremoniously?" and he looked at me quite reproachfully.

I couldn't help laughing.

"Perhaps so formal an encounter ought to conclude formally," I said, giving him my hand. "Good morning, Mr. Marston."

"Good morning." He raised his hat as courteously as though I had been Connie herself; so I honoured him with a gracious bow, in careful imitation of my cousin's best manner; and turning, ran home the way I had come, with, I flattered myself, quite the grace, if not all the speed, of an ostrich.

I never paused to smooth my hair, all tumbled though it was, but proceeded straight to the breakfast room. My aunt, to my surprise, made no remarks on my tardy appearance, for which omission on her part I was indebted to a letter that she had just received from my uncle, who was travelling in Italy. In this letter he suggested—he never ventured to do more than suggest—that she and Connie should join him there and stay for a few weeks, afterwards returning home by Paris. "If you think it well to bring Flora, too," he added, "I needn't tell the child how glad I shall be to see her; but you will know best about that."

"Of course I do," concluded Aunt Constance, folding up the letter, while I watched her, with eyes full of eagerness and hope. "No one but your uncle would ever dream of our taking a girl out of the schoolroom abroad with us. You are a mere child at present, my dear, and must amuse yourself at home as best you can. No"—as I was about to venture on a feeble expostulation, worse than useless though I knew it would be—"I have quite made up my mind on that point. Say no more."

And I, who had not been permitted to utter a single word, was reduced to an ignominious silence, and took refuge in my tea-cup. Then my aunt rose from the table, summoning Miss Mills to a secret council on affairs of state; and I, seizing the opportunity, retired precipitately to the schoolroom, and bemoaned my evil destiny in gloomy solitude, weeping copiously over the dingy old horse-hair sofa—my confidante in many a childish woe and girlish trouble; tearing my yellow hair in impotent wrath, and clenching my small brown hands in deep despair, as I reflected on all that I had lost by my aunt's heartless decision. When poor old Mills came to look for me she was received with such bitter complaints of my aunt's selfishness and injustice as fairly terrified her, and for a long time, all her kindly little attempts to comfort me proved quite unavailing. Connie's cold, common-sense did more for me than all Miss Mills's warm sympathy. "What possible good can there be," she remarked, calmly, "in making such a fuss. Mamma never changes her mind, you know that well enough; and though, of course, it is unfortunate for you that she has resolved to leave you at home, she has resolved, and there is nothing more to be said."

Ah, Connie, how easy it is to be philosophical about other people's misfortunes! I pointed this out to her in a few plain words, when she gently assured me that "she sympathized very much with my disappointment, and was heartily sorry for me."

"Keep your sorrow for them that want it." I responded, not too amiably, burying my head among the hard, slippery sofa cushions.

"I thought you did, dear;" was her mild rejoinder. "You must allow you look as if you did;" and, so saying, she left me to my own devices. They started the next day, leaving me under the care of Miss Mills to "amuse myself as best I could."

I suppose my aunt, taking into consideration the magnificent resources at my disposal in the most dead-alive of all dead-alive country villages, thought the prospect before me a most inviting one, but unluckily I couldn't see it in quite that light. Moreover it rained unceasingly for the first two days after their departure, and poor Miss Mills had, to put it briefly, a bad time of it. On the third afternoon it was still raining, but less heavily; so I arrayed myself in an "ulster," and a pair of thick and ancient boots, and sallied forth under a large umbrella in search of a little distraction, and—for the sake of poor Mills—a better temper.

It was a very damp, unpleasant world I found myself in as soon as I had closed the hall-door behind me. The air was misty with moisture, the tress looked as though their leaves, sodden with rain, were much to heavy for them to carry, and as though they limply expostulated all the time against being expected to do it; the ground was soft and muddy where it wasn't under water; and the flowers were draggled and dirty. Altogether, the scene was not an enlivening one, and nothing would have induced me to remain out but the depressing recollections of the still greater dreariness within doors.

I must have a little change before I could return to the delights of dear old Mill's company, so I set out for a solitary ramble, taking the path through the fields where I had met Mr. Marston the other morning.

How long ago it all seemed.

As I approached the stile, I saw with surprise that someone was leaning against it. Who was idiotic enough to dawdle about in damp fields like that? True, I did it myself, but then I had been worried out of my senses first, and had taken the precaution of bringing an umbrella of ample dimensions with me. But this person—Ah, I thought as much—Mr. Marston! Strong confirmation this of Connie's theory with regard to him.

He was looking down the lane as I came up, consequently I was only favoured with a view of his back. The prospect, though good of its kind, was not sufficiently varied to interest me for many minutes, and the path where I stood was to all intents and purposes one vast puddle, I really couldn't wait any longer on the chance of his turning round and observing me when he had quite completed his leisurely survey of the distant country; so I lifted up my voice and said, "in accents" anything but "sweet and low"—

"Mr. Marston, how long are you going to occupy the whole path? I don't want to interrupt your meditations, but—"

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, turning hastily, and discovering me shivering in my puddle. "I really had no idea—Why, is it you?" staring at me in most unjustifiable astonishment. "I thought you'd gone."

"I'm afraid the wish was father to the thought," I returned, smiling sweetly. My spirits were rising already in hopeful anticipation of a little conversation with somebody besides the worthy Mills; and now he had somewhat rallied from the shock of my sudden appearance, Mr. Marston really looked rather pleased to see me.

"I assure you there was no relationship of the sort," he answered laughingly; "I heard you had all gone abroad for some weeks, and very sorry I was to hear it, too; though you mayn't believe me when I say so."

"Why not?" I inquired innocently. "There are not many nice families in Gurton, and I dare-say some people like my aunt very much; while Cousin Connie is really not half a bad girl if you only see her sometimes. It was very natural that you should be sorry."

"And how about Connie's cousin?" he asked mischievously: "for you know I thought you were gone away too?"

"I? Oh, I'm a 'mere child' only fit to 'amuse myself at home'!" I returned bitterly; the sense of my unmerited wrongs lying hard upon my sad, young soul. "Aunt wouldn't be bothered with me."

My lot sounded so strange and lonely when I spoke of it to this outsider, that I felt my eyes fill with tears of tender self-commiseration.

"Poor child!" he said kindly; "that was hard upon you, certainly. Tell me all about it. But come out of that puddle first. How stupid of me not to see that you were standing in the water all this time. Now you'll catch cold or something dreadful, and I shall never forgive myself."

"It wouldn't be your fault if I did," I remarked, carelessly. "And I never catch cold. Don't bother about me, please."

"Well, do let me help you on to the stile;—that's about the driest place I can see within reach—and tell me how it is you have been left at home. Do you know, I'm afraid I shall find it very hard to condole with you properly under the circumstances."

"What circumstances?" I inquired, establishing myself as comfortably as I could on the wet slippery stile.

"Existing circumstances," he retorted, with a smile. "'Circumstances,' as Mr. Micawber says, 'over which we have no control.'"

"I wish we had a little control over the weather," I said; "this incessant rain is a circumstance I don't admire at all."

"I fear it is very wretched for you," he answered. "Is that stile very damp?" looking anxiously at the little streams of water that were oozing perpetually out of the sodden posts.

"Indeed, it's not at all bad," I, cheerfully assured him. "But won't you come up, too? There's plenty of room, and it is very wet where you are standing."

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks?" he said, laughing. "Don't trouble yourself on my account, but tell me about your troubles."

"It's a long story," I informed him, with great self-denial, for I was longing to pour my woes into his sympathizing ear. "It will only bore you."

"Tell me the whole of it," he said, heroically; adding with the rash confidence of ignorance, "I assure you it will not bore me."

So I told him the whole, weary story, just as it had happened; while the rain pattered a monotonous accompaniment upon my umbrella, and danced derisively in the puddles around us. He listened with a sympathetic interest deeply gratifying to my wounded spirit, only interrupting me when I told him how I had "hidden in the schoolroom and howled," refusing to be comforted, with a sudden ejaculation that I couldn't quite catch, but I fancy it had some relation to my aunt's prospects in a future state: that it was not prompted by a *kindly* interest in that lady, I gathered from the hasty manner in which he endeavoured to stifle the said ejaculation, substituting for it the words, "Poor little soul!" which, though perfectly harmless and proper, certainly did not refer to my aunt! Moreover, at my familiar mention of "dear old Mills's" name, he stopped me to inquire, for the better understanding of my story, who "Mills" might be? "Is he a dog?" he asked anxiously; "or what?" At which I relapsed into peals of laughter.

"She's only an old lady," I gasped, as soon as I was able to speak at all. "The dearest old thing in the world, and my governess. I'll show her to you some day, and then you'll see the absurdity of asking if she was a dog. A dog! Poor old Mills!"

"I see it now," he said, laughing too. "But I shall be delighted if you will introduce me to the lady, and so give me an opportunity of apologizing to her for my mistake, you must admit it was a natural one. But now go on, and tell me the rest of your story;" he added, with the rather masterful manner that appeared to be natural to him; and I meekly obeyed.

"So you see," I concluded, when all had been told, "I'm too young to do anything but amuse myself at home, with poor Mills for ever clucking, clucking after me, just for all the world like a hen with one chick. Isn't it too absurd at my age?"

"Where is Miss Mills now?" he inquired, somewhat irrelevantly as it seemed to me.

"Asleep by the school-room fire, probably. She generally sleeps all the afternoon, except when I'm having my music-lesson."

"Then for this hour at any rate you are usually free from her 'clucking,'" he said, with a look of considerable amusement.

"Oh, of course she can't be always at it! But to treat me like a child at my age! It's simply ridiculous."

"Let me see; what is your age?" he said, thoughtfully. "Seventeen is it not? Yes, that is a good age, certainly. But you know, child," with a mischievous look out of the dark-brown eyes with which he was steadily regarding me, "you don't look so old. I'm sorry for you, but you don't indeed."

"How horrid of you," I exclaimed, springing to the ground in my anger and mortification; "How unkind and horrid of you to say such things. I told you all my bothers, for I thought you were sorry for me, and would be nice about it: and then to speak to me in that way. I'll never tell you anything again; never!" and I turned, and began to walk rapidly through the puddles in the direction of the Grange. He was at my side in a moment. "What have I said?" he asked, looking, as well he might, utterly perplexed. "I'm

awfully sorry, whatever it was. Do forgive a fellow, Miss Spencer, you know I wouldn't offend you for the world."

He looked so handsome as he stood there, all wet and muddy; and he spoke so earnestly—calling me "Miss Spencer," too, just as if I had been Connie—that I felt my purpose die within me.

"You said I didn't look so old as seventeen;" I spoke severely, to hide the mitigation of my wrath.

"Did I?" he exclaimed. "How could I make such an absurd assertion? It must have been in chaff. Why, now I have an opportunity of looking at you"—of which opportunity he certainly availed himself. "You really look, you know—yes, you look awfully old!"

After that I could say no more, and during the next twenty minutes or so we walked up and down the path, conversing affably on a great variety of subjects.

The rain had ceased, and a faint, watery gleam of sunlight ever and anon brightened the damp country. "We shall have a fine day to-morrow," said Mr. Marston, as we paused to admire the improved aspect of affairs: and, as he spoke, the evening sun came boldly out from behind the clouds, and poured over field, and wood, and purple hill such a flood of dazzling light as is never seen except when the air is loaded with moisture, after torrents of rain. Then it deluged the earth with golden glory, and almost compensates us for all that other deluge that has gone before. At least, so it seems to us looking back, in the clear light of the present, to those dark cloudy days that are past.

Something of this was in my mind as I stood with Mr. Marston in the mud that evening, and thought on my dark depression during the past three days. Not that any very brightening influence had since shone upon my life, that I was aware of, but somehow it was impossible to feel so very doleful while looking at such a sunset, and I was presently moved in the spirit to confide to my (no doubt) deeply interested companion the gratifying intelligence that "I was feeling ever so much more cheerful than when I came out."

"Are you?" he said, heartily. "That's all right! I'm very glad to hear it. I'm afraid it must be very slow for you just now. If only my mother had been at home I'd have got her to ask you to come and see us sometimes, but unfortunately she's away on a visit to an old friend. Its confoundedly unlucky!" In which sentiment I heartily concurred.

"Then you are left all alone, too?" I said sympathetically.

"Yes," he answered, with a smile. "All alone, I haven't even a 'dear old Mills' to look after me. We are two unfortunate young people cruelly deserted by our respective families: let us do our best to console one another. What do you say?"

"All right," was my brief and emphatic rejoinder. What else could I say to so touching an appeal?

On saying good-bye to Mr. Marston that evening it felt quite like parting from an old friend—as if Miss Mills was about to set forth on a long voyage to the other end of nowhere, and I was bidding her farewell on the pier.

Quite the same!

Yes, quite!

(To be continued.)

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL"

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

AYLMER did not stay longer, but hurried away on his quest. First to the Deanery to state something of the occurrence there. As it happened, the Dean had not retired; he was greatly concerned, and ringing for the footman, the trio proceeded to the cathedral.

With Aylmer the Dean thought that it was a cruel trick. The footman, not a brave young man, was content to follow in the rear. The small lantern the Dean himself carried had a puny and Will-o'-the-wisp effect that did not go far to reassure James.

As Aylmer suspected, the door opening on the loft was found to be fast. The Dean looked round for his man. James was so close the Dean nearly trod upon the timid fellow's toe. James was sent off to the sacristan's house for his key. If he could make nothing of the sacristan, he was to go to Mr. Pulsford's lodgings. They heard James's hurried feet, and the Dean turned to Aylmer with a light laugh.

"I think my footman has not a very good heart!"

"No," said Aylmer; "he contrives to be close at our heels, and he is expeditious getting out of the cathedral."

The few remarks that followed were rather forced. The Dean was somewhat changeable in his mood; he was now inclined to be incredulous; and Aylmer, now that all was still, was somewhat afraid of looking foolish, for should the delinquent have escaped, or the prisoner have extricated himself, his story would perhaps be met with some impatience, if not derision. But while they were standing there, the light from the small lantern illuminating a circular patch of the pavement before them, it became clear to both that some one was pacing about up above; then they heard what sounded like footfalls on the stone stairs, and the door was hammered at impatiently.

"Some one is fastened in, that is certain," said the Dean, roused again. "Who is there?" shouted he.

There were confused sounds in return, but no intelligible reply.

"Who can it be?" asked the Dean of Aylmer. "Not Mr. Pulsford?"—he would have answered me. "Mr. Pulsford!" shouted the Dean.

There came no answer, only a sound of feet tramping upward.

"Surely he must be there from choice," said the Dean, puzzled; "any sane man would reply. You see," continued the Dean in an explanatory way, "we have left certain doors open for the convenience of my family and friends for I may say years, and nothing has occurred before. I am glad you came direct to me. That man is a long time."

Shortly James appeared, and in a low startled voice whispered that the sacristan had to be roused, and that he would be there presently.

"I expected as much," said the Dean; "well, he has sent us the key."

James was not at all comfortable with the adventure. His very errand to the sacristan's house, past the old gravestones and monuments, added to his vague alarm. Now, when the key was inserted, James inwardly regretted taking up the lantern which the Dean had deposited on the flags, for it necessitated his advance forward at the head of the exploring party. The man's face was such a picture of reluctance and dismay that Aylmer, happening to gain a view of it, laughed outright and took the lantern out of the man's nowise tenacious hand. The Dean looked at his man somewhat critically, out of his eye stealing an amused glance at Aylmer.

"Are you afraid, James?" asked the Dean.

But James was not composed enough to reply audibly, he was only too glad to find the sacristan at his back. James had carried to him some wild story, and the sacristan, tumbling into his clothes hurriedly, had come to witness the upshot.

"Some one is in the choir, Baxter. A lady coming through has been frightened."

"Why, it's that daft fellow, sir, for sure," said the sacristan, with an inspiration. "He's always about. Mr. Pulsford sometimes has him to blow. He and Miss Devensemey were here this afternoon, and then they came again at night, but how they have gone down 'ithout seeing him is a capper. I'll soon find him," said the sacristan plunging into the darkness James feared. Without apology the sacristan pushed himself past the Dean and Aylmer, and laid his hand on the half-witted fellow's shoulder.

"Come along, Stephen; you'll have to give up prowling round here a-frightening folks. Come along wi' thee!"

Stephen was somewhat frightened at the glare of faces. He pulled a forelock of hair and looked abjectly helpless at them all.

"A' couldn't mak' noan on 'em hear, they was all so deef!" whined he, finding his voice.

"Stephen, get you gone home, and don't you talk afore your betters," said the sacristan authoritatively.

"Well," said the Dean, relieved, "all's well that ends well. It is more satisfactory getting to the root of the affair. All sorts of wild stories would have got about. But we must not have this talked about, you hear—Baxter—James. Mr. Pulsford must be spoken to, he must see that his man is out of the loft for the future. We must have no more ladies half-frightened out of their wits."

"I must go down to Lady Mary Footitt's and tell them who was the horrible gnome."

"Yes, if you will," said the Dean, "it will be better. Tell Miss Heron how sorry I am she should have been so frightened. She ought to have been accompanied home. I don't know why she could not have stayed the night at the Deanery. I must talk to Mrs. Pomfret. There must have been some oversight. If I had but known—".

The Dean checked himself, he felt he must not bring Mrs. Pomfret forward for criticism. Really, the Dean never did run counter to his wife; if he had an opinion, he kept it to himself.

"Baxter," cried the Dean, "are you going to see this poor fellow home? some one must. If you

are not at liberty, James shall go with him—that is," said the Dean slyly, "if James is not afraid of him."

To Aylmer's surprise, Lady Mary herself was sitting bolt upright in her drawing room. The old lady had not gone to sleep as Davison supposed, her ears had been alert. She had detected signs of something unusual, and had come down. Her attitude now was keenly expectant.

"How d'y'e do, Mr. Aylmer. Hum!—How about all this to-do? Have you discovered the ghost or goblin and thrashed him within an inch of his life?"

"No, Lady Mary; I have laid hands violently on no man."

Edith Heron, though a little agitated, could now smile. "I can see by Mr. Aylmer's face that I have frightened myself with my own foolish fancies," said she.

"No; it certainly was enough to terrify any one," Aylmer maintained. "We will not have it you had no grounds for alarm," and Aylmer entered into an explanation.

Edith Heron could laugh now, but Lady Mary was a little haughty and imperious: it was no laughing matter she declared.

"They ought not to allow that cracked fellow in there at all," Judy Mary spoke out wrathfully, "he will be gutting the place, setting fire to it, as another madman did once to a cathedral—I remember hearing of it. It is no use laughing it away; such things have been done. Something dreadful will happen. I shall talk to Mr. Dean. I shall have a crow to pick with Mr. Pulsford—oh yes, I shall, Edith. Why didn't he see that numskull was safely outside—and Cicely Devensemey—why should she be there at night? I am sure it is not a proper thing, and I shall tell old Devensemey what I think—".

"No, aunty, you mustn't do that," pleaded Edith, in great tribulation.

Lady Mary shook her head; if somewhat less resolute in her intention, she was not disabused of the idea that Cicely Devensemey was acting most improperly or thoughtlessly, or she was Janus-faced. Aylmer saw what the great element of disturbance was; the old lady was fearful of her niece's lover becoming lax and inattentive. In fine, Lady Mary feared Edith would lose her lover and Cicely Devensemey gain him.

"It would be no great loss, upon my honour," thought Aylmer, sarcastically.

"May I call in the morning, Miss Heron?" he asked, after receiving a most gracious "good night" from Lady Mary. "I shall learn then what sort of a night you have had."

"Oh, I shall get some sleep now," said she, with downcast eyes. "I am sure we are nothing but trouble to yon."

"Oh, but I will call. I shall be more satisfied."

Was there something in the grasp of Aylmer's hand beyond mere cordiality. Edith herself was wondering.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN A GARDEN.

AYLMER felt himself on tentative ground, dubious of advancing. The axiom that all is fair in love

or war needs certain premises. Bearing in mind the late hour he had departed from Lady Mary Footitt's house, also the incidental fatigue and excitement of the previous night, he judged it expedient to defer his call until a late hour. It was noon when he left his house for the Close. He sent in his card and great was his disappointment to find apparently only Lady Mary Footitt at home. Lady Mary was less brusque with him than of yore, treating him with more deference, showing signs of a better regard for him. He thought these indications of Lady Mary overcoming her old prejudices. Aylmer had spent some little time over his toilet, he began to realize there really was something immoral in evincing Bohemianism. Inquiries after Miss Heron's health and nerves were met by Lady Mary most graciously. She even went so far as to express gratitude for his succour in times of real need.

"Indeed, Mr. Aylmer," said she, "you seem to come to our relief always in the right nick of time," and she removed Aylmer's disappointment by adding, "Edith is in the garden; I will call her in, or at least Davison shall. She said she would go sit under the old apple tree: it is our summer house, you know,—the air is quite mild and summery to-day, or she ought not to be sitting there."

"I will go to her, if you will permit me," said Aylmer slowly, hiding his eagerness.

Old Lady Mary was not slow-witted. She looked at her caller for a moment, as if dimly suspecting him of some sinister design. Then, feeling that she ought to continue the rôle of tolerance, gave way.

"Very well, Mr. Aylmer. You are a man bent on putting yourself to the greatest trouble. I think we shall never get out of your debt."

"I trust not, Lady Mary," said he, with a smile. "I shall only be too well repaid if I have gained friendly dispositions."

The crafty old lady nevertheless toddled up the staircase to view Aylmer from a convenient window. She wished to witness his conduct in the garden. The old lady was very suspicious. What did the faultlessness of his dress mean? She could not allow any duplicity; Mr. Pulsford had received encouragement, he had been inquired about and his antecedents deemed satisfactory. She could not have one man made miserable by another springing up late in the day. Moreover she had not entirely overcome her grudge against the perversity and mental obliquity of Aubrey Aylmer, the parent of this young man. Like father, like son, she reasoned: the slip must have the same tendencies as the tree.

But Lady Mary could see nothing in his greeting beyond the politeness and address of a gentleman to a lady. She certainly could not hear what was said, only she noticed that Edith tendered her hand without any reluctance, looking up with a clear smiling countenance, unsolicited—Lady Mary believed—making room for him to sit beside her upon the garden chair.

"She is quite at her ease with him," muttered Lady Mary *sotto voce*. "I can have no trifling."

Perhaps it was forced upon Lady Mary that there is a natural affinity in some natures, that Aylmer and Edith were much more suited to each other than the organist and Edith. Lady

Mary had not the slightest idea that the person most criticised by her—Cicely Devensey—had somehow been introduced into the garden party's *causerie*.

"I met Miss Devensey," said Aylmer; "she acknowledged being at the minster that evening with Mr. Pulsford. It seems she already knows about your fright."

"I think every one will know," returned Edith, desperately.

"You see, neither the Dean nor I could compel those fellows to secrecy—I mean old Baxter and the footman."

"It has come to her through the Dean. The Dean has had some conversation with Mr. Pulsford about seeing that half-witted fellow out of the minster—" Edith hesitated, lowering her eyes. "Mr. Pulsford was here quite early, he did not stay long—we had not breakfasted. He said he was sorry for the occurrence, and he would take care it should not happen again. Of course, if I had thought—however I did not know the organ-blower was a poor demented fellow. He cannot have acted in that capacity long."

"I am sure I don't know," said Aylmer. "Have you had Miss Devensey?" he asked with emphasis.

"No, I am expecting her."

"I hope she will not come," said Aylmer bluntly.

"Why, Mr. Aylmer?" asked she, raising her eyes demurely, she wished to affect surprise, all the time she was smiling to herself.

"I don't think she would do you any good," said he, "she is too offhand. You are looking pale this morning, although I think you have quite recovered yourself."

"I must confess I slept lightly; your kindness coming back quite dispelled any fearfulness I might have retained. But now and again in the night I could not help thinking over it. Indeed, my sensations in the cathedral were at one time horrible."

"Pray do not recall them, I am sure it will be much better if Cice—Miss Devensey does not come. I am afraid she would wish to cross-examine you."

"Rather laugh at me for having such weak nerves," laughed Edith; "but pardon me for interrupting."

"Really, you have anticipated me."

Aylmer mentally resolved to stop Cicely Devensey from coming.

"I did not think you would think so. I thought you would think Cicely would wish for a complete and veracious narrative. Poor Cicely, she dearly loves to get at the foundation of everything. But I know she will have quite a firm opinion of what she herself would have done under the circumstances. Honestly, I believe she would have passed through such an ordeal better than I."

"I don't know," said Aylmer doubtfully; "I think you exhibited much presence of mind. I must confess I felt a chill myself when I heard the fellow's voice."

"Then men are afraid sometimes?" said Edith, with a smile.

"Oh yes, they are, I am not ashamed to say it; they are quite timid sometimes. I always feel that I dare where any other man would attempt."

"Who dares do more is none."

"Happy is the inference," smiled he appreciatively. "But anything that approaches the supernatural exercises a peculiar supremacy over the human mind. The most intelligent are often the most nervous. An illiterate being accepts ghosts and goblins as part of his creed; an intelligent man has had his natural fears eliminated by progressive evolution, shall we say, but he thinks, or rather over his confidence in a moment of trial comes the supposition, if this or that after all should have some truth in it. Oh, I am quite ready to admit to you, that men, myself among the number, have timorousness, diffidence."

"I quite understand what you mean, Mr. Aylmer," said Edith guilelessly.

"I know you will. From boyhood I have always been terrible for hanging back. I have often thought I owe it to the manner in which I and my father lived, hermetically you know, as if we were in one of those sealed tins, no air to get in. My father was the dearest companion, but for all that our closed-in life was not good for me, I believe now. It tended to make me desperately reticent away from him. He used to say that when I came in contact with the world my angularities would all get rubbed off—I think I have them yet," he added with a low laugh.

"Possibly you brood over them," said she shyly, "as you suggest I am likely to do over my last night's adventure."

"Perhaps I do at times," admitted Aylmer, "still I am not a misanthrope, I have other things to think about; I have not the time to think and pose as a Diogenes. When I am gloomy, it is when I am not occupied, perhaps after stress of work, when I have not seen a cheerful face for a day or two."

"I hear there has been much sickness."

"Yes; but a pleasanter way of thinking has compassed me about. I seem to have made a few friends, if I might number yourself among them?"

"Oh yes," assented she.

"Yes, to speak honestly," said he, bravely, "I have often wished to count you among my friends; nay, go further—"

He paused for a moment, he could perceive her bosom rising and falling with suppressed emotion, her eyes no longer meeting his with the clear calm attention of an interested auditor.

"My dear Miss Heron, I have perhaps startled you; still, if it would not excite you unduly, I would prefer to go on."

She did not reply nor look up just then. He was not despondent because of that, he did not expect her to reply. If he had felt it a forlorn hope, that she was doomed to failure, disappointment, annihilation, he would have believed it best to make a stand.

"Have I not known you from your childhood," said he tenderly, "and yet my knowledge of you has been confined to a simple estimate of your character and temperament. I now know that I was correct in my judgment, that you are affectionate and true and loyal, that you would not shrink from any sacrifice required of you, no matter at what personal cost to yourself. I have looked at you furtively, I may confess now (this she well knew), and hungered for a word from you. I did not know the tone of your voice—I have

not erred in my faith, that it must be sweet and tender. Shall I tell you that in my eyes you have during all my life been the one perfect woman—"

"Not perfect," she interrupted him with a trembling voice.

"Has not your conduct proved it? Your goodness towards Lady Mary?"

"Consider what she has done for me, the sacrifices she has made," denurred she, her voice low as if in a dream.

"Yes, yes," assented he, but with some show of obstinacy. He paused for a moment, scanning the fair face, unable to see the eyes hidden under their long fringes. Lady Mary beholding them was not comforted: was ever such a pair of dreamers? At last he found his voice again; "How few would have relinquished what you have. They would have gone their own way, disposed to help, but still determined not to give up their own chances of advancement, to live with her, so few—but I will not go on with that. I am convinced of your goodness and kindness. Even the house became sanctified to me because you lived in it. As I looked furtively at you, so I looked furtively at the old house. The window, I knew it well; each tree and figure on that piece of old china indelibly imprinted upon my mind, the dim outlines of the furniture. It was an impertinence on my part—sometimes you were near the window—I then felt ashamed of my rudeness, but I was always attracted by your eyes to look again. I know Lady Mary has a desperate opinion of me, I inherit a legacy of suspicion. How I used to wish I had some plea for an introduction, but I would not take an opportunity to become acquainted unless I was satisfied with it myself. Perhaps I am not quite clear—Dick Devensley, that dear fellow, always seemed as if he suspected me. He would sometimes say he was coming here, his sister Cicely was here, I might accompany him. He would introduce me. No, this was not legitimate; I should enter the house an intruder. It became a hopeless passion with me: I felt I must be content if I saw you happy. I confessed to myself that I was but a *fainéant*, that I was not worthy of you; the prize must slip from me because I had not the courage, the *savoir faire*—Have you read the little story?"

She simply inclined her head.

"But then I had not quite entered into such a psychological analysis of myself."

He continued silent for a few moments, but he had unconsciously taken her hand. It lay in his without any attempt at withdrawal, yet somehow he felt it was there on half terms. She had some pity for him, she allowed it to remain on sufferance. Why had he not disregarded all social etiquette, come to her, asked her to be his wife?

"Edith," he continued, "for once allow me to sink conventional usage, to hear myself address you by the name which in my dreams has re-echoed its sweet burthen. Edith, if a time comes when you are in trouble or perplexity, will you look to me? Heaven knows, I do trust you may have no occasion to demand my services; you have had your share of troubles, I know. Do I distress you? I have distressed you?" said he with self-accusation, "your gentle eyes are moist, I know you have a sympathetic heart. Perhaps

I had better leave you. I am come too late in the day. I had not a right or any excuse to say what I have said. But I felt I could tell you this now, I could not talk to you later. If I could hear you say I have gained something of your confidence—that you will rely upon me—if I cannot hope for any other privilege."

"I have not heard you unmoved, Mr. Aylmer," she replied. "I am afraid that much in the life that lies before me will not be all that I could desire. But perhaps it will be a life that will be much better than the lives of many others, so that I must not repine. Well do we act if we act in truth, if we follow duty."

"Is not our duty often little more than pleasing one's friends?" said he hastily. "Do our friends think as much of our happiness as of their own prejudices and preferences?"

"I do not know," said she, wearily.

"You must pardon me," said he, humbly; "it is unfeeling of me to give you a doubting heart. I can comprehend it all. I will not forget myself again. But, before I go, may I hear from your own lips that you will count upon me as one ready to serve you?"

"I could not demand any sacrifice of you. I must rely upon myself."

"But there are some occasions when sacrifices yield comfort and happiness. Promise me that you will think of me."

"I do promise, then," said Edith, quietly.

He had such a nice sense of honour that he shrank from urging her further.

He relinquished her hand.

"Thank you," said he; "I feel now that I have a legitimate interest in you. If I do not ask for more, it is because I wish you to be true to yourself."

He left her under the gnarled old apple tree. Once upon a time he had looked down from the summit of the minster, and had pictured to himself Edith Heron and he walking in lovers' fashion up and down the garden paths.

Lady Mary scanned Aylmer's face anxiously.

"She is not looking well?" questioned she, "she is in a weak nervous state, is she not? She must be kept quiet, you think; she must not be troubled with those children for a few days, eh?"

"It would be better not," said he.

"I will send a note by Davison," said Lady Mary. "I must not have my birdie's heart flutter and beat its wings as if it were caged and deprived of freedom." The old lady looked him through and through. He felt himself give way before the look and the words.

"Is she quite free from anxiety, Lady Mary? I mean, is there anything more beyond this fright and her duties that disturbs her?"

"We cannot be quite free," said Lady Mary, evasively, a quaver in her voice.

"I did not mean to wound, Lady Mary; your niece thinks so much of duty and obedience."

"She is a good girl," said Lady Mary, with dignity, "and she is right not to forget duty."

"Yes, Lady Mary. But we cannot help being saddened and depressed at times. Perhaps she suffers a little depression from last night. And I—I came here a little heavy of heart; I have been with a sick girl who cannot last many days—the young girl Miss Heron has been so kind to."

"Have you told her?" asked Lady Mary, quickly.

"No, I thought it better not."

"I am glad; she must not be told to-day. It cannot do the young girl any good Edith going—"

"Oh no; I refrained because I thought it would not tend to raise your niece's spirits."

"Thank you, Mr. Aylmer; I believe you are a very thoughtful person. I shall be glad to see you again, if an old woman is any company for you, you know."

"She knows now that I love her, love her until I die," mused Aylmer on his way home, "she will not forget that. If I had declared myself more clearly, she would have been compelled to give me an answer of some kind. If she were to discard that fellow now, no matter how he and Cicely are conducting themselves, every one would lay the fault upon her, if he chose to complain of the ill-usage he was having. I think we can wait; the time will come when I can be more explicit."

(To be continued.)

ANGLING.

Of all the amusements in which men take delight,
There's none equals fishing, day warm but not bright,
Soft rain may be falling, gentle breezes be blowing;
Your basket perchance you'll then fill to o'er-flowing.

A fisherman anxious some sport to obtain,
Who'd been shut up indoors by a day or two's rain,
Came at last to a pond where he hoped would abound
Roach and dace, and some tench in good numbers be found;
Of a boy who was lying on the grass very near,
He inquired, "Are there fish in this pond that's so clear?"
The answer returned, "If so be they're but small,
For this pond was quite dry before yesternight's fall."

There are some men expert in all ways of fish taking;
Tho' anxious attempts another one's making
And tries very hard the best weight to catch
Still one by his side will be more than his match.
For anglers are selfish and try to retain
To themselves all the knowledge that they can obtain.
Of any big fish, the locale and the whereabouts,
In the waters they're fishing or anywhere thereabouts.
They hook a big fish and they play loose and fast,
But soon the line breaks and they lose him at last.
The size and the weight are of course much inflated
In the stories they tell when the loss is related.
And if that in fishing you take much delight,
In a punt you may shiver from morning till night,
And though you'd the patience that Job had of old
The deuce of a thing may you catch but a cold.

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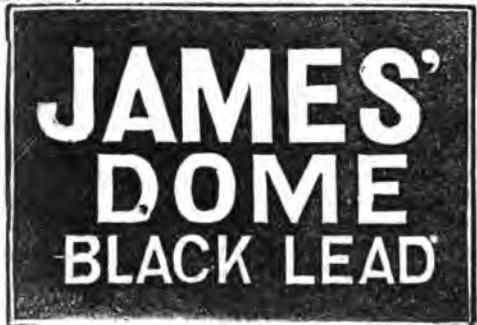
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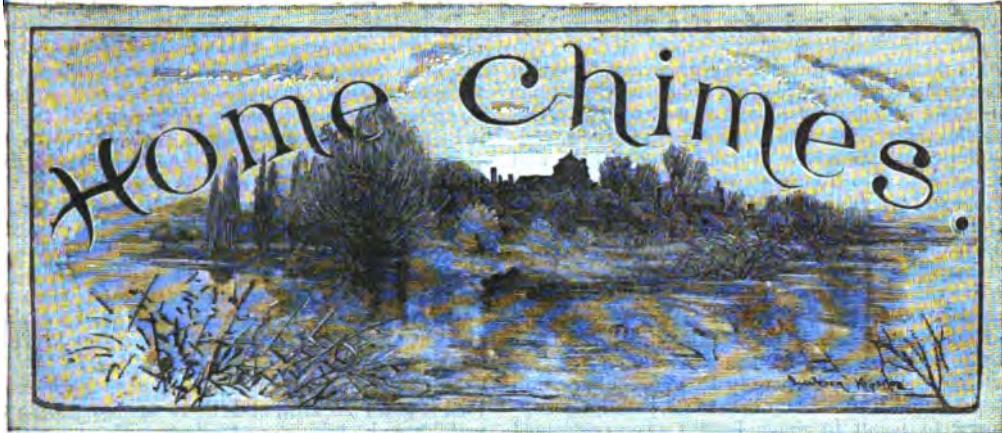
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EDITED BY F. W. ROBINSON.

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[PRICE ONE PENNY.

CHRISTMAS.

CHRISTMAS bells ring out again,
Telling in their joyous strain,
Of by-gone hopes and by-gone fears;
The Christmases of other years.

Christmas snowflakes, thick and white,
Glistening in the starry night.
Christmas berries, large and red,
Shining brightly overhead.

Christmas roses, pure and fair,
Gleam like snow-clouds in the air.
Christmas smiles adorn each face;
Words are full of Christmas-grace.

Christmas tears, they softly fall
For the joys beyond recall;
Christmas tears, they gently flow
For the love of long ago.

T. S.

CHUBBY.

BY JEROME K. JEROME.

THAT was not the name given him by his godfathers and godmothers at the time of his baptism. It was the name given him by the postman at the Duke of Clarence, when he went to fetch a nip for the lady at the fried-fish shop, and when, owing to his own extreme smallness, and the excessive weight of a somewhat corpulent female, who, coming over tired, was compelled to suddenly lean up against the swing door at the exact moment that he had got himself half-way through it, he and the bottle were very nearly being broken into fragments; and the whole bar was thrown into confusion by an unseen voice exclaiming in thin, muffled tones :

"Hi, make 'er get up. She's a squashing o' me; and I want a quartet o' gin."

In bestowing upon him the soubriquet of "Chubby," Bob was considered to have achieved a high work of sarcastic humour, he (the so-dubbed Chubby) being a particularly scraggy, and cadaverous-looking youngster. Besides, Chubby suggests a laughing, bright-eyed, lovable little fellow, and Bob's Chubby is not this. There is nothing attractive at all about Chubby. There is an unpleasantly old and cunning look about his pinched face, and his dull, bleared eyes never sparkle with the light of childhood. His rags are not of the picturesque order, and his language, when "put to it," would shock a four-wheeled cabman. No, there is nothing attractive about Chubby. He is not the sort of boy you would stop, and pat upon the head; indeed, his head would be the last thing you would think of touching; and, did you purchase from him an evening paper, or a box of wax lights, you would be careful to drop the money into his hand, not put it there. Even the shop-boys who stop in front of him to gaze at some vile publication or other, and to listen to the filthy contents that he screams into their ears at the top of his childish treble, are careful not to go too near him; and well-bred dogs, after one sniff, make a circuit to get round him.

Bob has certainly displayed humour in calling him "Chubby."

Not that it much matters what he is called: nobody ever wants him—unless, maybe, it is to get out of their way. He is always in everybody's way.

He is more in the way than ever to-night, for it is Christmas Eve, and the pavement is not wide enough for the people. Bustling, good-tempered crowds throng the streets, jostle and chaff, block each other at the corners, stream in and out of the shop-doors, and cluster round the shop-windows. Everybody is busy and in a hurry, while he, having no business, nor pleasure, nor profit in view, and indeed, no object, place, or purpose, as it would seem, in the world at all, is naturally in

everybody's way, and more of a nuisance than usual.

He meanders idly about, taking no consideration for people who are marketing, or buying Christmas presents, or going to places of amusement. Old gentlemen, puffing along, laden with parcels, suddenly find themselves stumbling over him, and threaten to give him in charge. Stout ladies, on going to turn round, find him inexplicably mixed up with the voluminous folds of their ample skirts, and drat the child. Young men, rushing to meet their sweethearts, all at once feel his head in the pit of their stomach, and request the young beggar, in extremely impolite language, to get out of the way. Shopkeepers, looking after their goods outside, suggest the advisability of his hooking it, unless he wants to undergo a certain painful and unnecessary operation, popularly supposed to result in much benefit when performed upon the persons of small boys. Drivers of all sorts yell and swear at him the moment he steps into the road, and policemen regard him sternly, and admonish him with a gruff, "now then." The boy is in everybody's way, and always will be—until he gets out of it altogether.

Left at peace for a moment in front of a brilliantly lighted toy-shop window, Chubby spreads his legs out and stands firm, looking in. Not that he cares for toys, or for anything else except what he can eat or drink, but it is warm there, and he is tired of being pushed about.

Two other little lads are also standing there, looking in. They are very different to Chubby. They are clean, and bright, and pretty—two jolly, happy little fellows; and they are chattering away to one another as fast as their tongues can go. They are full of what they are going to do on the morrow, and one asks the other if he is going to a party. "I am," he adds, without giving time for a reply. "Willy Norris's mamma's servant came this afternoon with an invitation for me, and there's going to be such lots there—only boys and girls though, no grown-ups—and there's going to be a Christmas-tree, and a magic lantern, and I'm going to wear my new knickerbockers."

Chubby doesn't hear any more, for, taking hands, they run off together; but as he stands looking after their warmly clad little figures till they are swallowed up in the eddying crowd, and listening to their cheery voices till the sound is drowned in the general roar, a feeling of envy springs up in his heart, and, for the first time in his life, there comes to him dimly a sense of his own loneliness.

For the first time in his life, he feels miserable. He has never felt anything before. Feeling-sensation of any kind—has never entered into his log-like life. But now it is born within him, and gnaws him like a hunger.

He walks along quickly, trying, like a wounded cur, to get away from his pain; but it grows as he moves, and hurries him along faster.

He finds himself in the Strand at last, and there stops. He has reached it by a sort of instinct. It is home to him, and he loves it. It is gay and noisy and full of life, when all other places are gloomy and dull. There are dark nooks and corners along it, into which he can crawl for shelter from the wind and rain, and whence he can look out upon the bustling stir and the lights, and hear the sound of human voices.

It is late now. The omnibuses and cabs are already clearing off the pleasure-seekers, who are none too anxious to linger long to-night on their way home. Chubby seeks his bed down a steep lane, leading towards the river, and selects it by a sunken doorway there, between two posts—a dreary, deserted spot; though close to the hubbub and roar, and where he feels safe from the prying glare of the dreaded bull's-eye of E 214.

Crouched there, he watches the people pass the narrow opening at the top. First, in twos and threes, laughing, talking, and boisterous; then single stragglers, hurrying past each time at longer intervals. Every minute it grows darker as light after light is turned out, till at last the dim street lamps are left to burn alone.

He feels more wretched than ever now—now that it is all so still, and there are no people to watch; so he tries to go to sleep. But he cannot get to sleep. He twists and turns, and shakes himself, and grunts, and resolutely shuts his eyes, but the drowsiness will not come. Instead, he finds himself thinking. It is a new experience to him, and he cannot quite make himself out. It is what he overheard the two little boys saying that still keeps worrying him. He cannot get the idea of Christmas parties, and trees, and new knickerbockers out of his head.

He doesn't know much about Christmas, except that the good people down Fullen's Court get a trifle more drunk about that time, if possible, than during the rest of the year. As to these Christmas parties, and trees, and knickerbockers, he never heard such talk before, and he is not quite sure what it exactly means. He has a notion that a party must be nice, because he once heard the lady who keeps the whelk-barrow at the corner of the court telling the old man at the coal-shed that the one they had had in celebration of her father's coming out of "quod," was a roaring smack-up one; and he has himself stood outside big houses when parties were being given, and watched the people going in, and they have all looked awful swell and jolly.

Does every one go to a party at Christmas, and have lots to eat, and not feel cold? he wonders, as he wriggles about with a vague, impracticable idea of getting his head under his arm for warmth, as if he imagined himself some sort of a bird. He went to a party once. He recollects it now. There were lots of light, and it was warm and dry. There were ever so many other boys there, all ragged and dirty, like himself, and they had bread-and-butter, and tea—hot tea—so hot. It makes him feel warm to think of it; and how comfortable it made his inside! He wonders if those two little boys will have any tea, and if it will be as nice as the tea he had. There were ladies and gentlemen there, too. They didn't have any tea or bread-and-butter, but they talked a lot, and some of the gentlemen, when they talked, shut their eyes and stuck their hands up in front of them, which made him laugh, it looked so funny; and then a pretty lady came and told him they were praying, and asking some one, called Jesus, to help him. She told him such a lot of rummey things, about this Jesus. She said that He had once been a little boy just like Chubby, only not dirty, and that He loved little boys, although He didn't live here now, but in ever such a jolly nice place ever so far away. Chubby can't remember the name of the place, only he knows the lady

said it was somewhere up where the sky was, and that one day, perhaps, he might go there; and he wonders how ever he is to get up to it. And she said he must try and love Him, because Jesus was very good, and had done a lot for him, and Chubby wondered what it was. And she said this Jesus was so fond of him that if Chubby asked Him for anything Jesus would give it him—that is, if it was good. So the pretty lady told him.

Sitting there, looking up at the stars above him, Chubby begins to puzzle as to who this Jesus is that is so fond of him, and what he has done to make somebody he has never seen care for him, and ready to give him anything he asks for.

"Wonder if He really would," thinks Chubby, "guess they've been a-coddling me."

But the pretty lady said He would, and Chubby thinks she couldn't have told a lie, she looked too beautiful.

But what is the good of his asking for anything, if He lives all that way up. He can never hear him. He heard those gentlemen, though. The lady told him they were talking to Him, and they were just as far off, and shut up in a room, besides. Why shouldn't He hear Chubby out here, with nothing between him and the sky!

"Wonder if He'd send me an invitation to a Christmas party?" thinks Chubby out loud to himself. "That's good. There ain't no harm in that. I'll ast 'im, anyhow, and chance it."

But Chubby suddenly recollects his rags, and looks down at them. Somehow, little as he knows about fashion, they don't seem quite the correct costume for a party. It occurs to him, too, that he is rather dirty. He begins to feel doubtful. Perhaps he isn't fit to go to a party at all. The other little boy was going to wear new knickerbockers, and supposing new knickerbockers are expected at Christmas parties! "I guess, though, He knows all about it," Chubby argues; "perhaps there's parties where it don't much matter, like the one where I had the tea. I'll ast 'im."

Chubby folds his hands before him, and, shutting his eyes, like he saw the gentlemen do, says very earnestly, "Oh, Jesus, if you please, Sir, send me an invitation to a Christmas party—somewhere where these yer rags won't matter, and where they won't mind me being dirty, like."

He opens his eyes, and feels more cheerful, after that. He is quite certain now that he will have an invitation. Of that he hasn't the slightest doubt, and he will sit there and wait for it. He forgets that he is cold and hungry, forgets E 214 and his bull's-eye, forgets to huddle himself up out of the way of the wind. It darts underneath his tattered rags and plays with his matted hair. But he does not feel its icy touch. He sits there, bolt upright, his hands clasped round his knee, and his big eyes staring straight before them, and seeming to be looking at something a very long way off.

And the silence, like an unseen, creeping thing, steals out, and wraps the City in its deadly folds, and the sounds of life sink hushed. Fainter and fewer they come and go:—hour after hour, from many steeples, the clatter and the tolling of the bells, and, clear and loud above the rest, the voice of old Big Ben, solemn, mournful and slow—a dull, splashing murmur where the river flows deep and black—a creaking of old barges,

straining and tugging at their moorings—the slow, steady tramp of E 214 as he paces his beat, halting at times to rattle a door or shutter—the sound of swift wheels rising out of the distance, drawing nearer and dying away again—the quick, sharp tread of some solitary foot passenger—the dismal howling of some watchdog, awakened by the cold—the wailing moan of the wind, sweeping through the empty streets.

So the Night with her rustling garments passes slowly on her unknown way, and the mighty City, like a restless child, sleeps fitfully, and ever starts and cries, and sinks once more in quiet. And Chubby still crouches in the corner of the sunken doorway—still waits and watches for his invitation.

At last it came.

Children brought it. Such a host of children. Chubby could see them stretching away in a never-ending throng past where the stars were shining, and the dingy lane was radiant with a great light. They all knew him, and called his name. They pressed around him. They took his little, dirt-grimed hands in their pure white ones.

"Chubby!" cried the children, laughing round him. "Chubby, you are to come with us. Jesus has sent us to fetch you. It is His birthday today, and we are going to have a great party—all children—and you're to come too. Come away, Chubby; come away. Come home with us."

And Chubby accepted the invitation, and went.

* * * * *

E 214 has put out his lantern, for the day is dawning, and is taking his last round before resigning his beat, and going home to wake up his wife and get some breakfast. Stopping for a moment at the top of a narrow lane leading from the Strand, and casting his eye along it, he sees something sticking out a little way down, and goes up to it with the professional tread—dignified, impressive and slow. Getting nearer, he sees that it is a bundle of rags enclosing the figure of a dirty child, sitting in the corner of an old wooden doorway, its hands clasped round its knees.

"Hulloa," says E 214, not unkindly. "Come along, my little fellow. What are you doing here? Get up. You'll catch your death of cold." But the bundle of rags doesn't stir, and E 214 goes up and lays his hand upon it, and then starts back. "Blowed if he ain't, too," says the man.

"Poor little chap," says the Inspector, who has just come up and taken it all in with one quick glance. "I don't wonder, such a night as this. How is it you didn't see him? Well, it can't be helped now. We must take it away."

So it's taken away, and laid in the parish dead-house. Nobody knows what it is until the Inspector thinks he has seen it along with old "Waterworks Sal"—so called from the quantity of tears that this lady sheds during the course of the day, and the ease with which she taps them—whereupon he sends for Waterworks Sal, who is found at her favourite haunt, just outside the back door of the Royal Standard in one of the courts behind Drury Lane Theatre, where she can aggravate herself with a sniff—when, it won't run to a taste—of what she loves most on earth, or heaven either, for the matter of that.

Oh, yes, Sal knows it, and begins to snivel at once. Loved the precious babe as if it had been her own. Here, the Inspector casually reminding

her of his having found her sitting on "her own," one morning on a doorstep in Russell Court, she explains that that was only an accident, caused by the dear child's having slipped round underneath her when she wasn't noticing, and refers back to Chubby. Remembers distinctly offering it a sip out of her own glass the very last time she ever set eyes on him: "and would you believe it, he wouldn't take a drop, bless him." What is its name? Why, "Chubby." At least, that is the only name she ever heard of. "Bob at the Duke of Clarence—drat the mean-fisted cuss—gave him that name, just in fun, and it is the only one he was ever called by, bless his art, the little angel; and has Mr. Inspector twopence about him, as he is a kind, good gentleman, heaven bless him."

Mr. Inspector—Waterworks Sal having blessed him on this occasion as much as she usually curses him, and retired—turns and looks at the little bundle lying there, at the grimy, pinched face, and the thin, bony hands folded across each other. "Chubby," repeats Mr. Inspector softly to himself. "H'm, poor little shaver, he don't look it!"

Then Mr. Inspector makes a note in his big pocket-book, and goes out.

WHEN THE SNOW MELTS.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

TOPHEAVY banks of congealed snow make a funnel of the dripping path between my highland school-house and the high road. Taking to-day a telescopic view down its dreary length, I saw it close in for the first time this week on a speck of black. It proved to be no lost crow, but a human being. Like a blind man restored to sight, I watched this growing blotch of colour in a white world, wading knee-deep through the yielding slush. As he jumped and wriggled his way to the school-house, through the slough of sloppy snow, that met with a drowning gluck as he drew his feet out of it, like a disappointed crocodile snapping at a swimmer, I recognized the clerk of the board. He had taken advantage of the thaw to wade his way to me with the news that the inspector had fixed the examination for the beginning of the month. That was stealing a valuable fortnight from me; but measles had broken out at Tirl, where he would otherwise have been, and the inspector had to take it out of some one. My face blanked, I daresay, as the clerk showed me the intimation in its official envelope, and I already saw my outspoken Fellow of Oxford invading the glen in his overpowering carriage and pair.

The clerk would have been pounds lighter could he have shaken his feet out of the shapeless lumps of muddy snow that hugged his boots. As it was, some of the crust fell off to his vigorous stamping, and the rest he dragged after him into the school-house. I had four pupils: my own boy, Waster Lunny's little girl, and two more toddlers from another farm. The clerk surveyed them quizzically, lost behind their squeaking slates among clammy desks that had forgotten the prick of boys' gully knives, and shook his

head. He tried to speak, but the echo from the empty room startled him into silence, and we went ben to the kitchen. The loss of the Government grant stared me in the face. To hold my hands over the fire was to see it vanishing up the chimney in smoke. I laced my boots with a heavy heart, determined to take the advice of the board, as conveyed by the clerk, and canvass the farms in person. The farmers might be again persuaded to yoke their idle horses and bring the children through the slush in carts. This mode of conveyance had been abandoned two winter's before, after Tullin's stallion and cart got stuck in a howe of snow, from which the children were rescued one by one by Waster Lunny's grieve on horseback.

The crusted snow in the fields sinks sulkily under our feet (for all the crispness has been taken from it by the thaw), leaving room for a dark film of water, as we work our way down to the ford. One of Waster Lunny's hens, that had distinguished itself earlier in the year by throttling a hungry rat in the henhouse, accompanies us to the limits of the farmer's domain, but cannot be induced to trespass, and our weariest work begins when we reach the river. Winter drowns the stepping-stones by which the swivelling stream is easily crossed in the parched months, and except when there are horse and cart to rumble recklessly over the slipping sand and gravel, there is nothing for it but to wade. The farmers of the district have provided a pair of stilts on which acrobats can ford the rush of water with dry shoes, but our diligent search for them is unsuccessful, and my experience tells me why. They are doubtless hid away among the whins on the other side by some selfish ploughman, in anticipation of his return journey. The clerk plunges boldly into the water, glad to have the slush washed from his cheeping boots at whatever cost, and I follow, with mine dangling round my neck. The white bank is dotted with grey holes, showing where human feet have broken its surface without reaching earth. Evidently mankind is beginning to move about again.

In dark places the trees have melted the snow as it touched them. Their trunks show damp and sodden, the ruts overcharged with a wet green dust, but the palings they insufficiently protect have soft white tops, and it is by them we drag ourselves from farm to farm. At each a cheery welcome. To while away an hour from the listless farmer is to offer a big bribe for his children. All agree that an effort must be made to have the bairns at the school-house on the examination day, but they shake their heads at the sky when I insist that without regular attendance we are lost. The parents could talk by the hour of the intellectual powers of their boys and girls, but will not risk their lives to save my specific subjects. A promise is at last drawn from some of them to send a cartload of children down to the ford on the morrow, if there be no further fall of snow. The understanding is that Waster Lunny's cart meets them there and carries them to the school-house.

The farms are scattered over the hill-sides, squat and silent in the general whiteness. It is afternoon by the time we leave Whinstanes and cut the elbow of the glen where it turns sharply to the right and runs its head into a gully. To

us who have fished the river until you lose it in a wilderness of morass, the road presents no special danger, though it is felt rather than seen. Water trickles down the rocks of sandstone, perforating the snowy sheet at their base, and the stream, running deep, squeezes its way between narrow scars. The general effect, even on a sunny day, is depressing and damp. To-day the threatening cliffs scowl across the water into each other's face, suggesting the explosion that must follow if the jammed water were to freeze; and we remember the legend of the girl who fell over the rocks to her death, on her way to market, without any of the eggs being broken in the descent. There is a swirl of water higher up the glen that fascinated the earl's mother-in-law into taking a shower-bath in its reeking foam. At the farm of Brunt Braes, for which the clerk and I were bent, they show the ropes by which she was dangled in mid air across the linn.

Brunt Braes is standing helplessly near his door as we cross the steading dyke, his long face showing red against his good wife's "washing," that hangs hard and brittle from the ropes. The thaw has not been sufficiently keen to soften the linen stiffened by nature's starch. The farmer is a decent man, cursed with a scientific leaning that had brought water-pipes into the house, to burst with the approach of a thaw and flood his house. A monster hole in the swaying ceiling, down which a continuous rush of water, carrying woodwork and plaster in its headlong course, splashes to the parlour floor, gapes over swimming chairs and tables; and all Brunt Braes can do is to wring his hands and tell his frantic womenkind to "sweep it up." His exasperated wife, too excited to stay with us in the kitchen, finally pushes him out of doors, and we strike down the brae to the manse without further parley. In the circumstances it would be mockery to mention the examination, and we are footsore and weary. A lighted candle stuck by some mischievous boy in the window of a gaunt tower that stands shelterless in a field, though itself a shelter to shivering cattle, winks in the darkness to the wind; the sun has long since sunk behind the hills, and the manse in its ring of cottages stands out invitingly in the night. The snow fast loses its colour.

The minister's story of life at the top of the glen bodes ill for my school attendance. In two Sabbaths the kirk door-key did not leave its rusty nail in the manse library, and an attempt at service on the third nearly ended tragically. As the handful of worshippers and their dogs, not one for every dozen pews, were on the point of filing out, a mountain of snow clattered down the roof and fell with a thud on the doorstep. A moment later, and men and women would have been buried. The parishioners stood with their hearts in their mouths, and then, to the whining of their dogs, followed the minister out by the vestry. Later in the evening I cross the road for the key, thought to have been left in the kirk door, and in groping for it my hand strikes a hanging rope. In the still night the bell clangs shrilly, and the ghostly hills murmur in their sleep. The uncanny cry goes from ben to ben round the dreaming glen. I stand as if turned to stone. In the crumbling keep the light blinks itself to death. I sleep at the manse.

"FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELTON,

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMATEUR THEATRICALS.

THE following day Aylmer was somewhat surprised to see Dick Devensey hesitating between his surgery and the door of his house. Aylmer opened his surgery door and saluted him.

"Back again, Dick—I hope no ill wind——"

"Now Aylmer, ask a fellow how his health is before you begin to think the worst of him. I haven't been in Tremminster two hours. I have been here once before, but you were out."

"Yes, I am making up my own medicine now. I can take you into the house in a moment or two, then you can unfold your budget, or you can go in and wait for me."

"I will wait until you can go with me. Aylmer, I've seen Irving," said Dick with bated breath.

"Who else?" inquired Aylmer calmly, pausing in his work to regard Dick critically.

"There you go, as if a fellow was to burn the candle at both ends. I've been in company with old Hanson, fine old man he is; I told him that I thought it was a fine thing to be a first-rate actor, and that I should like to be one myself."

"No doubt. What did he say—be satisfied with being second or third-rate first?"

"Nothing of the kind," said Dick sulkily; "what he did say was, why not adopt the profession, if I had talent for it."

"I doubt, Dick, you have thought more of theatres than dry bones."

"Now, don't be hard upon a fellow. You are coming out of your shell, I hear, if all I hear be true. Cicely has told me that you have consented to take part in a little affair if we can get it up. I must say I was thunderstruck. However, I have been and engaged the Assembly Rooms for a date in case any one else should be wanting them."

"You are most prompt," answered Aylmer; "I do not know that I said I would take a character, if that is what you mean by taking a part; to the best of my recollection I said I would help. Now, if you are ready, we will adjourn to my parlour. Come along, fly."

"Well, I hope you will not run your back into the hedge," said Dick, mournfully; "I don't want to go back and tell the curator we don't want the hall, that the affair has fallen through."

"I won't go from my word, if that will please you. I will help you, but I have not sufficient assurance to pose before Tremminster."

"Well, I met with one or two fellows, they belonged to the old lot, they are delighted, and delighted to have you in; we have half settled what we shall have."

"Really, you do not allow grass to grow under your feet when it is anything you do take an interest in."

"Well, there is nothing like taking time by the forelock, I must be in town again in three weeks, and we must have the first rehearsal this

week. We are going to astonish the Tremminster people—give them a good melodrama and a rattling farce. Swords and pistols and combats, changes of scene, red fire."

"Where are you going to get your scenes? that will run you into expense—and just taking into consideration the forethought—you must have everything ready: it is simply appalling."

"Not it," said Dick, whose greatest merit was in never seeing a difficulty. "If you won't take a part, you shall be prompter and stage manager."

"You are very considerate. And who is going to do the scenes?"

"Well, I have thought of that,—you. You are an exceedingly fertile fellow in expedients: you give directions, I will be your clerk; we shall want pails and pots of colour. I will be the labourer, you the master. You know you are a fair draughtsman, and I shall help to bring you out."

"I wish I had half your confidence," said Aylmer, with a laugh.

"We will get Pulsford to play us a tune or two, and I think we shall manage without any songs. We might engage a few stringed instruments."

"And I suppose by installing me as stage manager, if the affair be a fiasco, I shall be the responsible being for the failure."

"Bah! it won't be a failure. I have seen the piece, it is simple as daylight. We have thought of 'The Momentous Question'; have you seen it? It's a lively thing. With the farce we hang between two fires: the 'Area Belle' is Plimpton's fancy; I want to have 'Chiselling,' but Plimpton says we shall never get up the statue."

"Of course, you think you would be able——"

"I do. But I will give way rather than commence with doubts."

"Oh, you are considerate, I know. Well, let me know a night beforehand the time for your first rehearsal. Of course, you must fill in without me, remember; that is understood."

"Well, yes, if you are going to be scene-painter, stage manager and prompter, you will have plenty upon your hands. Friday night is the first rehearsal. You may depend upon me getting fellows to fill in. But I think we must have a meeting before, and as you are to be stage manager, you ought to prick the parts. I am going to write by this evening's post for books; you shall have a couple, farce and drama, as soon as they reach me. We must lose no time."

"Where will your preliminary meeting be?"

"I don't know, I had not thought of that. We can go to an hotel——"

"No, I put my veto on that. Supposing we hold it here?"

"You are a good fellow. I thought of that, but did not like suggesting it. Well, I will warn them all as soon as the books arrive. Now I will go and hunt up the school."

Before the day was over Aylmer felt himself a person of importance. First one young fellow, then another, accosted him, excited and eager. A great amount of nonsensical complaisance and sanguine faith was exhibited in each actor in embryo. "I wonder," thought Aylmer, "if I shall suit every one in the disposal of the parts? I half wish I had set my face against that. I wonder what Dick has been telling them, they all seem to look up to me as 'Sir Oracle'?"

For each one was effusively profuse in his acknowledgements, and hoped Aylmer would pull them up if they showed the slightest tendency to slur a point or miss a hit.

The books reached Aylmer in due course. It was certainly a great advantage knowing each man, his capabilities and character. Dick Devensley had furnished him with a list of names, and had intimated to him that he would have a full room that evening, every man had promised to come, as Aylmer thought, to see fair play and have justice done to himself. Aylmer had not a doubt that one or two characters would be chosen mentally by each man as the part best suited to him. Incidentally he mentioned to his housekeeper that she must not be surprised or alarmed if his room was filled to overflowing.

Eight o'clock was the hour, and the members of the company were desperately punctual, every one of them. Perhaps some of them regarded Aylmer as a long maligned being, for he had not been unmindful of creature comforts. The footstool was kicked about from pillar to post, and the housekeeper, bringing in a second pitcher of water, was scarcely able to find her way into the room, so dense was the smoke from pipe and cigar. In her heart of hearts the worthy woman thought her gentleman must have taken leave of his senses. But they were all upon their good behaviour, and the harmony was complete. Fat Fred Prendergast, who was liable to be noisier than all put together, was unusually self-contained and grave. Fred had a conviction that it was impossible to find a comic man to equal him, but for all that was the reverse of his friend Featherstone, who laboured under the delusion that if he threw up the affair, it would fall through. Of him more anon. Apparently all were satisfied with Aylmer's arrangements.

"You'll get us the programme out," suggested Dick Devensley. "The drama, you know, something to excite curiosity. I will give you the last programme if that will be of any use to you. I put it together, but I was ashamed of it. The farce, you know, must be full of quips and cranks. You're a witty fellow, Aylmer; you've had many a shot at me, you must put some of your best things on paper to make us all laugh, and put our audience in a good temper."

"Do you want anything else doing, Devensley?" inquired Aylmer.

"Well, I scarcely know what else will be required of you, but be good enough to hold yourself in readiness."

Not every one was so familiar as Master Dick, but there was a chorus of diffident laughter as they trooped out.

"Don't you think it would be better for every fellow to get up his part well before we have another rehearsal?" said Aylmer to Dick Devensley after the first was over: "there is not two who know anything of their parts. It is rather a dull business for me."

"Phew! that wouldn't work at all, Aylmer," replied Dick; "you do not know them as I do. Why, if it were left until the last week, most of them would be where they are now. Independently of their good opinion of themselves, their conceit in their retentive memories, more than half of them will only commit their parts to memory at rehearsal. Of course, we will trust to the ladies; we

will not trouble them to come to our meet night after night, but we will have them the last week, and the last week must be rehearsal every night."

"I doubt I am in for it. When is the stage to be fitted up?"

"Oh, the carpenter who fitted it up before must be engaged. The curtains are easily fixed, we only have one difficulty, and that is with the cords, they twist so, and the curtain does not drop nicely—sticks; you remember it, don't you, but we'll rub the cords with a little French chalk, it acts upon them like magic."

A few days later Dick rushed into Aylmer's room with a terrible long face. Aylmer could not remember ever to have seen him so agitated and despondent.

"I say, Aylmer, what shall we do? We shall have to throw up the business after all. It is an abominable trick. Feather has sent his books in; he says he finds he cannot go on with it. The fact is, he has an idea we cannot get on without him. I know what his reasons are; the principal one is, I believe, that he can't have the comic part in the farce. You gave him the best part in the drama. I am off now to give up the hall—get off if we can."

"Cannot you get any one else to take the part? Or, Dick, get some one else to come in. No, don't go and give up the hall, my dear fellow."

"Won't you take the part, Aylmer?" pleaded Dick.

Aylmer shook his head.

"Consider me a little, my dear fellow, and what I have upon my hands. We will not give it up; what is more, we will accept Featherstone's resignation, but we will not have him at rehearsal."

"He says he does not sever himself from the A. D. S., but it is press of business that compels him."

"I am not for quarrelling with Featherstone because he chooses to throw up his part, only I think it ought to put us all on our mettle. I did not like Featherstone's manner last week. I did think he was not suited, but a fellow ought to be satisfied with whatever part is assigned to him. A good man makes a small part. We shall get on as well without him. It would have been ten times worse for us had he thrown it up a week later. Go home and eat your dinner; there is nothing now to interfere with your digestion."

As may be supposed the news of Featherstone's defection created some consternation in the camp of the A. D. S. The excitement was only partially allayed by Dick's representations, wherein Aylmer figured as the only really reliable man they had.

"We have got him into such a mood," said Dick impressively, "that I believe he will go on with it, if we all take it into our heads to break away from our engagements. He is a determined fellow is Aylmer, I can tell you."

"Well, I vote," said Prendergast, "that we put all power into his hands, that we constitute him sole authority, that there shall be no appeal against his decision and no questioning it."

"We shall not get on unless there is some arrangement of the sort," said another, "and I will second that."

"Well," said Prendergast, "there are three-fourths of us assembled here under the lawn ceiling. Now then, how many dissentients? How many for it?"

"Carried unanimously," said Dick Devensey.

"Well, Devensey, you need not tell him about this impromptu meeting. After it is all over and we have scored a success, then you may if you like, but just let him run away with the idea that we are naturally docile."

As it was approaching eight o'clock, the party proceeded in force to Bachelor's Hall.

Some time was wasted in ventilating their grievance, but Aylmer at last got them all together, reading the part for which there was no man. He was surprised at the accord, the absence of all diversion. They were as serious and as grave as a party of professionals under the eye of the lessee. There certainly was not much advance from the previous week, Aylmer mentioned this, and was met with fervent assurances of rapid amendment before next rehearsal.

"It is too bad," said Dick to Aylmer, "here I know all my share of the drama, and I shall have committed the farce to memory by our next meeting. There was that good thing always about Feather, he did get his part off in good time. If he had not such a crotchety head, taking offence, fancying all sorts of injuries, he was our best man. Prendergast may be depended upon, but he does not hurry about getting up his part."

"I am the most alarmed about young Berry, he has a fine voice and a good manner, unfortunately he knows it. I am afraid of him overdoing his business."

"There is one comfort he has not much to do. But you must pull him up, Aylmer, be right down vicious with him, he bears no malice. We have chaffed him until he has gone mad almost, but he forgets his grievance in less than two minutes. He is like a child in some things, he can't see when the fellows are drawing him on, that's the worst of him. You'll find a much worse fellow than he—Belford; now to night by his talk you might fancy he was the best fellow we have, he has the catch words as if he had been an actor all his life, he is as jaunty as if he had all the confidence in the world."

"He knows little of his part; I have discovered that."

"He will barely get it up, little as he has to do. I am glad I was able to give you his character beforehand, likewise Berry's. You will have to be sharp upon Belford, I can tell you, and watch him that evening, for every bit of assurance will leave him, and he will be nervous as a cat. He will be helpless."

"Why, he talked about assisting me with the stage."

"If you had no one else to depend upon, I should pity you. I should not be surprised at his requiring priming either with brandy or sal volatile."

Before all the rehearsals were over Aylmer knew exactly who might be depended upon, and who must be watched and assisted. He felt he had not distributed the parts badly. Without Dick Devensey's hints, he would have gone by his own judgment, only it was an advantage being acquainted with the conduct of each man at previous entertainments. But an audience in a provincial town will make due allowance if a hitch occurs. Very often a mistake passes unnoticed. Few people carry books of the play with them; a wrong exit or a too prompt entrance is never observed. Still, it is well to have no

blunders. Mistakes are liable to upset the performers themselves. The time approached when it was considered by all that the stage must be got in readiness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORDRAL.

Dick declared the ladies were perfect in their parts, and that they were eager to attend a rehearsal—Cicely especially impatient. Aylmer worked hard to have everything in working order, so that there should be a couple of rehearsals which should not fall far short of the evening when it would be a serious business.

When all was ready, Dick received permission to acquaint the ladies that the gentlemen of the A. D. S. would be happy to receive them that afternoon.

"We will have the *chef d'orchestre* here the last evening; we shall want some plaintive music—just a few bars here and there; it heightens the effect," said Aylmer.

"Featherstone wishes to attend last rehearsal," said Dick mischievously.

"But we will not have him," declared Aylmer firmly.

"I never saw any one enter into such a business with such zest as you do, Aylmer," said Dick. "You have surprised us all."

"Why, if you do a thing at all I believe in doing it well."

"That scenery," said Dick admiringly, "will bring down the house."

"And if we make mistakes they will hiss us."

"Let them hiss," muttered Dick carelessly.

"I wish it to be a success for more reasons than one. It will do Featherstone good. It is a strange notion a man gets into his head, that people cannot do without him. No one living can declare himself independent and autocrat."

"Poor old Featherstone, I almost pity him," said Dick. "I am told he was standing outside last evening when we were rehearsing."

Aylmer half relented.

"Dick," said he gravely, "we must read him a lesson."

"Well, what is the time? Half-past seven within a minute. I might as well run down and fetch the ladies. We said quarter to eight, prompt. We thought of having Pulsford, don't you remember? We won't have him at all. I had forgotten, but Prendergast reminded me, we had a fellow once before as pianist, a gratuitous man, we had no thought of offence, but as he agreed to assist us we put him down first on the programme with an overture, and he absolutely refused when we got him there that night; he said he had had no preparation."

"Well, we must instil into our engaged *chef* that while the curtain is down he must keep on playing if it be the one old tune over and over again—'Music hath charms to soothe the savage'—audience, and they soon tire of gossip and the blank before them. The back settlements get uproarious; you know I have been in the audience beforetime, and I have been able to tell where the dissatisfaction creeps in."

"Well, I am off; we will have all that over again. You are fertile in forecasting. Ta, ta, ta, for twenty minutes."

"You must be up in less; all those fellows will be there."

It was close upon eight when Dick reached the hall with the ladies. How assiduous every gentleman was; fighting, some against shyness, some against the oddity of the proceeding. Who should come, too, but Desforges and his wife, ostensibly to have a peep at the stage. Desforges had whispered to Aylmer, that his wife thought the girls should have a chaperon—a married woman added colour to the proceedings; and the arrangement had been made between Aylmer and the doctor, unknown to the others, that Mrs. Desforges should attend the two last rehearsals, be in the green room the evening devoted to Thespis, and have the curator's wife in attendance.

"I shall miss the fun," said Mrs. Desforges regretfully.

"There will be as much fun behind," said Prendergast.

"You must not be too boisterous," deprecated Mrs. Desforges.

Prendergast looked guilty. Once there had been almost a riot in the purlieus of the stage, Prendergast the culprit.

"Mrs. Desforges means there is only to be sufficient refreshment behind to invigorate, not to enervate or excite," said Aylmer. "I shall set my face against wines; a little bottled ale for the men, the ladies what they choose."

"Well, we can settle that with the aid of the curator's wife," said Mrs. Desforges. "You had better commence I think. Ah, Philip, are you going? Just stay to see them begin."

Thus admonished, her dutiful husband lingered a few moments, returning again when Aylmer's forest scene dropped. Desforges was an enthusiast; he was so interested he stayed on and on until the prison scene fell; the worthy doctor's approval more vociferous than that of Aylmer's former critics.

"We shall have you before the curtain, Aylmer," cried Desforges.

"No, no; you must curb that; it will be impossible for me to leave my children," said Aylmer.

"You will have your prison about your ears if you do not come when you are called. Remember you are warned."

The night came to an end. The ladies found they must pay more attention the next evening to positions, and they had not thought the exits and entrances of so much importance, but with Dick they were to have an extra initiation in the day-time before rehearsal. Once Constable, entering impetuously, cannoned against Miss Heron, and nearly shot her off the stage.

"Heavily," said Edith, with a blush and a laugh, "I hope no gentleman will give that on Wednesday evening!"

"I think Lady Mary will be better satisfied if I am there with you, Edith," said Mrs. Desforges as they were going home together. "My husband and Mr. Aylmer have talked it over."

"How considerate of you. I did not like this business," confessed Edith; "but I gave a half-promise you see, at least Cicely Devensey said I did, and she would not release me. I do dread

the night; but it is not so terrible to me after this evening's experience. You see I have not so much to do as some of the men."

"You must not let your voice sink too much, dear; the hall is very defective in sound. When I am at the opposite end I cannot distinguish anything. Philip and Mr. Aylmer were speaking about it. Philip suggests cotton to be carried from one end to the other—two or three strands of that thick cotton one uses for netting. But of course the sound will be much better when the hall is full."

"I must have the copy for the programmes," said Dick to Aylmer. "Haven't you got it done? You know the time is getting short."

"Don't excite yourself," said Aylmer. "If you will come home with me you can have it. I have had it done a week or more."

"What a fellow you are to keep your own counsel," muttered Dick.

The next morning Aylmer beheld Dick rushing to his house with the open proof in his hands.

"We never had such a one," Dick shouted, jubilant.

The hour was at hand. In spite of Dick Devenssey's promise to see that everything was in perfect readiness, the members kept Constable running for articles they found they had not brought with them. Constable did not appear in the drama, so the door was relegated to him, Aylmer wisely bent on introducing no outsider there. "We will have no filtering if we can help it," said Aylmer, "we shall want money for expenses, for fees, and we want a surplus. Dick, you wrote out lists of everything likely to be required, where are they?"

"I can't help members forgetting to bring their own properties," murmured Dick aggrievedly. "I took Prendergast his helmet, and his torch and breastplate. I've been on the trot this last two days."

"Well, never mind, Dick, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. What is the time?"

"Half-past seven," said the breathless Constable, returning from one of his multifarious errands, "and there is such a crowd outside, there will be a riot if the doors are not opened. The men have come to show people into their seats, and the two boys to sell programmes."

"Oh, have they, then give the boys the programmes and open the doors. We must not keep the people outside, or they will go away again. You must go to the door, Constable—you have explained those spare reserved seats to the man."

"He came with me this afternoon."

"Well, go to the door, take all the shilling tickets with you, and if any one requires anything the carpenter must be sent. Have the ladies come?"

"Here they are," said Berry, "I will show them their dressing-room."

Aylmer occupied himself in placing the musicians, and giving them instructions not to be sparing of their efforts. The hall was rapidly filling and a war dance was being executed on the stage preparatory to the campaign.

"Here, you fellows, come off," cried Aylmer, when he judged there had been sufficient of it, "you will upset something, or do some damage. If it were not for the band, the audience would hear you. There is but ten minutes recollect, and I mean to be prompt."

In spite of Aylmer's apparent calmness, he felt nervous, and these antics were not at all sedative.

"Now then, are you all ready?" cried he, at last. "I am about to ring the bell. Moletrap and you other fellows get into your places; Chalk be in readiness; Robert, you too—and just inquire for Miss Heron, and if she will be ready in five minutes?"

"She is ready now," said Berry, returning; "but she is frightfully nervous."

"Hang it, I hope she wont break down," said Moletrap.

"Be careful you don't," said Dick Devenssey un-diplomatically.

This excited Moletrap, and Aylmer had to quell what looked like symptoms of a storm at the commencement.

"If Miss Heron will come, I will ring."

The band ceased, as also did the hum and buzz of conversation in the hall. Aylmer just peeped through a convenient cranny, and noticed that many eyes were directed towards the mysterious strands of cotton, but all were settling themselves down for close attention. Aylmer rang the bell again and proceeded to draw up the curtain, and the play began.

There was an ominous sound among the audience, some shouting from the gods—what did it all mean? Aylmer looked at Moletrap, who had turned round, having commenced his part with his back to the audience. Moletrap's face was the incarnation of indignation and suppressed rage; he forgot his nervousness entirely.

"Aylmer, pull up the curtain! It is only half-way up! I thought it had been properly seen to."

Aylmer felt horrified, but for his life he could not help laughing; he snatched the cords; the carpenter had tied two knots; he had hooked the cord upon the lower one.

Edith was laughing, she had caught a glimpse of Belford's indignant face, and the consternation upon the features of the other fellows, who, being supernumeraries, had not the fullest comprehension of the situation. To them, although odd, it might have been part of the programme. It was a fine opportunity for Belford enlarging upon having no chance to distinguish himself.

"Now Miss Heron," said Aylmer.

"Oh, I am dreadfully nervous, and a moment ago I had forgotten my nervousness."

"You must rely upon me; look to me if your memory plays you a trick; I shall follow you word by word."

There was a tremendous burst of applause. Edith braced herself, and Aylmer was agreeably surprised at the clear enunciation of her words. Edith dare not meet the eyes of the audience; she felt if she once looked at them all her presence of mind would go. She had a dim perception of a sea of faces, all bent upon her. But she warmed to her part, and she almost believed herself Rachel as she made her exit.

"Well done," whispered Aylmer; "you need have no fear again."

The curtain dropped a few minutes later, and the applause was tremendous. Aylmer could not go round to give the lady other words of encouragement, for now his work began—the scene had to be changed. The business of itself was farcical—Ridgeway assisting in his motley, Belford

in his eagerness getting in the way, occasionally muttering of his wrongs, the band playing with a will to deaden the noise of the scene-shifting.

It was now Cicely Devensey's turn to distinguish herself. She did not profess herself nervous. When the curtain rose, Cicely was quite composed. When Prendergast entered there was not a quiver in her voice, and the curtain descended again with enthusiastic applause.

"Now for the *piece de resistance*," cried Dick, as they occupied themselves in restoring the slips and letting down the forest scene. "We shall bring down the house."

The curtain rose, the clapping and stamping was deafening, and the voices of the gods behind were terribly uncontained.

"Hi, Aylmer, do you hear, it is for you this time—go on Ridgeway."

"I say," said Ridgeway, coming round, "we've forgotten one thing, it ought to have been night, some one ought to have turned down the foot-lights."

Aylmer felt confounded, this was mistake number two of his.

Ridgeway thought he had discovered a mare's nest, and began to button-hole Devensey and Prendergast as they came off.

"Get out," said Dick, "there isn't one in the audience will think about it. If it had been dark they would not see, we have no light to throw down from the top."

"Now then," said Aylmer, "we must clear again."

"Here," cried Dick, with a huge tankard, "refresh the inner man; every one is being reinvigorated except you. I had an awful thirst. It is hard work."

Aylmer did not know he was thirsty, but the draught of sharp ale seemed to make a man of him.

"Feel better? I knew you would be faint. I wonder if those ladies think of it. A little wine—eh?"

"Oh, Mrs. Desforges will see to them," said Aylmer. "I told her to see that they were properly looked after."

The concluding scene was received with tumultuous applause. Dick Devensey in a prison suit, fettered and despondent, thrilling the feminine portion of the audience.

In the second act Aylmer had reckoned on some respite, but he had reckoned without his host. What with firing pistols, and looking sharply after his coadjutors in the rear, he found his time and thoughts fully occupied. Constable was almost too eager to begin his display of red fire, which he had to scoop out of a tin bucket, and flare behind the cottage window. But at a signal the music at last came in to add effect to the tableau.

"Featherstone is here," said Ridgeway, a little doubtful as to the treatment that should be meted out to him.

"Oh, is he?" returned Aylmer calmly; he caught sight of Featherstone's rueful face. Dick Devensey instantly accosted him.

"Now then, Feather, how has it gone?"

"First rate," said that individual sorely, but honestly. "I never saw anything better. Beastly nuisance that curtain stuck, and the gas ought to have been turned down. I could have done that for you—"

"Put it out, maybe. No, for ways that are dark—" muttered Dick uncompromisingly.

Featherstone was aggrieved, and began entering into an explanation of his conduct, but Dick again cut it short.

"Well, we managed to get another man, so it is done with. Tell the musicians to come behind here when they have finished that waltz they are playing. We must give them some refreshment, or they will go out and not come back to time. You can look after them, Ridgeway. I am going to get Freddy up for the statue business after Belford and he have gone through their preliminary."

No doubt Belford thought his get-up, in soft felt hat, white trousers, and a velvet coat, immense, but Aylmer did not think so.

"Belford ought to have had a blouse and a linen cap," said Aylmer to Dick. "We won't tell him now though, it is no use, he won't have time to send a-borrowing."

"Why, I told him I didn't think he was right," said Dick, "but he said an artist friend of his sported velvet."

"Well, no one will perhaps know any better," suggested Aylmer, "say nothing; I hope Prendergast has got his helmet here."

"It is in that corner in a newspaper; he won't allow any one to look at it. He has had a jealous eye on it all night. He is counting upon this business."

The preliminary whetted the appetite of the audience, but Prendergast was long in coming, and the audience evidently began to think that there was a hitch, and it was not far at sea. Prendergast was so fat, it was a service of difficulty encasing him. Dick was panting after his exertions, but now Prendergast, with whitened face, looking more like a fat ghost, was prowling about on all fours looking for his torch. Alexander imagined some one had played him a trick, and his wrath was too deep for words. The commotion eventually brought the ladies, and a sight accorded to them of the disconsolate hero convulsed them with laughter.

"Oh, here it is," said Alexander at last, pouncing upon it, "it's rolled off that table; I thought some one had thrust it under the stage. Aylmer, you fix my helmet all right—had 'got it wrong side before?'"

The audience, if grown impatient, were electrified at the turn of affairs. If they expected a statue, it was not one endowed with locomotion; but as Alexander mounted his pedestal Aylmer noted with vexation that Dick had placed an unwhitened side of the box to the audience, and there it read, "Schweppé's Soda Water." But this the audience took as part of the joke, likewise later on when Alexander wished to light his pipe, there were no matches. Aylmer contrived to throw him some upon the carpet. Prendergast tried one, then another, and, forgetting himself, cried out in a tone of annoyance, "Hang it, they're safeties."

"Now then, Feather," said Dick, "how has it gone?"

"Not so well as the drama; you were so long there."

"If I had known," said Cicely, "I am sure I could have stayed on the stage longer; I could have dusted the furniture and talked to myself."

"I am glad it is all over," said Edith.

"What was the reason you were so long?" asked Featherstone.

"We had such a difficulty in petrifying Freddy, and then he had lost his torch," said Dick with a laugh. "It was rare fun."

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Desforges, "it has been greater fun behind the scenes than before. Oh, here is Philip; we shall get to know something now."

"I wonder," said Edith, "how we shall get our box home?"

"Here, Barry, Constable, take charge of the ladies' wardrobe!" shouted Dick.

"What do you think of play-acting?" inquired Aylmer. "You surprised me."

"I am very tired, and I can only repeat I am heartily glad it is over," Edith answered him.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOUBTS.

AYLMER felt himself privileged to call at the old house in the Close. Lady Mary had given him permission, but this was the first time he had availed himself of it. As he walked down the street his mind recurred to his last walk thither. Since that day he had felt his life fuller and happier, and though all yet seemed rather hopeless, he could not forget the exquisite relief that had come to him after his *confessio amoris*.

He had so ardently wished to be understood, at least by one person. She must regard his love as unselfish; he had not advised her to fly in the face of pre-existing arrangements, if the consequence to her were to be an after-life burthened with a sense of perfidy. To see her happy was with him a first consideration. It was as if the dove-like calm that was an attribute of hers had rested upon him. In all his waking thoughts her presence seemed to be near or with him. In *fever dens*, in squalid courts, he had thought of her. Sometimes a word was wafted, as it seemed to him, on gentle breezes, that had some reference to her.

"She has been here. Oh yes, sir, she comes here."

How many would come here? he would whisper to himself. It seemed to him that he could not help but encourage those grateful people to dilate upon her goodness. A little thing will encourage a gossip—an eye evincing interest, an ear turned, an expression not repellent nor impatient. Sometimes he saw her—he could not mistake her—and yet he had not gone out of his way to meet her, to persecute her with pleading eyes and quivering lips. Nor yet, *mauvais honte*, did he attempt to avoid her. Sometimes the modest eyes meeting his would take the initiative with recognition. Only when he passed the house was he careful to guard his eyes from roving. He did not feel himself a paladin, only a gentleman anxious to win a wife fairly, and look the whole world in the face, having wronged no man.

While he was thus giving such sweet unction to his own soul, and idealising the attributes of this one whom he chose to regard as the

fairest and most ingenuous of her sex, a convolution of his brain dwelt—only for a moment—on the previous night, and there he found pity for her, his Beatrice. She had been dragged into this display; her good nature had not been proof against persistency. To most of us a theatrical display loses all its glory contemplated with the mind's eye in the sunlight. He felt a little rueful over the business, more for her than for himself. How would she think of the affair now it was over? He had been carried on, a little less enthusiastic than zealous. Featherstone's defection and Dick Devensey's gloom had roused in him a stubborn determination to go on with the affair and make it a success. Public approval had come, if stamping of feet, clapping of hands, and shouts were evidence of it. But he was not altogether content in his mind, and he had awokened without headache, after passing a good night.

But by this he had reached the old house, and began to wonder how he would be received. Lady Mary had given him permission to call; he had left his card when he knew both were out. Would the old lady think, and think he had fully interpreted her? Lady Mary did think, but said nothing to any one, not even to Davison, to whom Lady Mary generally confided her thoughts, *mal à propos* at times, for Lady Mary, with all her shrewdness, had at times strange fits of childishness. But Lady Mary had watched her niece and sometimes the old lady was perturbed as if she were taking herself to task. She began to be a little anxious; she was not sure whether she had done right in being ruled by the Dean's vulgar wife; she began to wonder if that woman was to be regarded as an oracle, or a wise and thoughtful friend. Sometimes Lady Mary felt exceedingly rebellious because of her circumstances; her poverty was exasperating. With her money restored to her she could snap her fingers at the Dean's wife and the *coterie* of patronizing benefactresses. Moreover she was much exercised in her mind about Mr. Pulsford. He certainly came and stayed in the house as he was accustomed, but he always appeared to her to be uneasy, and relieved when he could get away. He was absent, preoccupied; sometimes she fancied his eyes fell before hers; that they rested on Edith flickeringly; that his tenderness was forced. She started at the thought, was the young man afraid of the future—afraid lest Edith should not be the helpmeet necessary to him in his position? She had half a mind to end all doubts, and offend him, so that he would depart about his business and there would be no more of it.

Of course all this time this dramatic business was on the way. Cicely Devensey was often in and out. She came one morning when Lady Mary was in such a mood; but the poor old lady soon shrewdly perceived that Cicely was talking to her, treating her as a poor demented being. She recollects her suspicions of Cicely; they gained in force. She had never really loved Cicely; she had not given her credit for duplicity, but she could see now, or fancied she could, that Cicely was playing a part. Was every one changed, or had she been blind? Was the world askew, or did the aspect of things rest with herself? She was curt with Cicely, and did not improve; the longer Cicely stayed the worse treatment Cicely got. Cicely at last took her leave of the captious old lady, glad

enough to get out of the house. Cicely's visit that day was the last straw; Lady Mary worried herself into being quite ill-natured. Cross with Davison, cross with Edith and brusque with her callers. The house was never clear of tiresome people, Lady Mary declared. She could see all these people passed her in judgment as an ill-tempered old woman; that they were bearing with her, making allowances for her age and infirmities, and all that sort of thing, and oddly enough all that touched the old lady's pride.

When Edith came in from the deanery, Lady Mary had recovered a measure of her serenity, if she had not succeeded in exorcising her anxiety. As soon as the shutters were closed, and the evening's occupation commenced, Lady Mary looked towards Edith and asked her if she had seen anything of Mr. Pulsford during the day.

"Only for a moment, aunty," Edith replied, without looking up.

"Where?" asked Lady Mary.

"In the street, aunty. He was going to the Lowthes. He had not time to stay more than a moment. His time gets more and more occupied. He wished to get done there before service."

"Is he coming here to-night?"

"I do not know, he did not say."

"He wasn't here last night, of course; but the night before he did not come. Did he tell you the reason?"

"Perhaps he was busy—he might have a lesson to give. Oh, no, he was at the class, and wished I could have been there."

"Why——?" said Lady Mary, and stopped, she was appeased a little.

"To take the piano while he conducts. He has asked me if I will go next week."

"Shall you go, dear?" inquired Lady Mary, with increasing cheerfulness—"but of course you will, Edith, you cannot refuse him. It will look as though you meant helping him," and Lady Mary half closed her eyes in pleasant contemplation.

"Oh, I have felt so cold there, and it is so tiring, over and over again we go, and they will not sing either to time or tune."

Aylmer looking in one night—the door was ajar—wondered at people being so good-natured or so stupid as to sit there at the cold season of the year without a fire. The greater portion were young people, who perhaps were of that age when older people have to think for them. But Aylmer felt concerned. Young girls drafted from warm firesides to, in comparison, a Siberian air. Well might lung complaints be prevalent, coughs and colds. That dull-brained tyrant had Edith Heron in harness, he thought. No doubt he had asked her for help, and she could not well refuse. Aylmer looked at her earnestly, happily she was well wrapped. But he determined to shame Mr. Pulsford, his first opportunity. "It must be his stinginess, nothing less. I can tell him," thought Aylmer, "that I shall consider it my duty to acquaint parents of the risks their children run—that will alarm him. Hang it, it would be a mean thing to do, and look more mean."

"Cicely told me she was going out," said Lady Mary, "she is a selfish girl, instead of staying at home to be a comfort to her parents, she lives as if she scarcely had a thought in common with them."

"Aunty," cried Edith, surprised, "what is the matter? Is anything the matter? Has anything worried you to-day?"

"I don't know," said Lady Mary shakily; "lots of people have been here, and I get tired of answering their questions and finding talk for them. And I get to thinking—I am always thinking."

"Oh, aunty, you must not disquiet yourself so. I am with you, I shall always be with you."

"No, no, you must marry, Edith, home life will be better. I am sure you will be happy with a good husband, one who is steady and persevering. You would be happy in a home of your own, would you not?"

"I am not sure, aunty."

Lady Mary looked at her niece somewhat anxiously again. Something like a forecasting of the future troubled her. What if all this scheming proved worse than fruitless! Could she rest in her grave if the poor child became the victim of a mistake, and a mistake she had done so much to entail.

"My dear," said Lady Mary in her thickest speech, her toothless gums trembling. "What makes you talk like this? Are you unwell?"

"Oh, aunty," cried Edith, "am I doing right? Did I do right to encourage him—to promise him what I have done?"

"What ails the child?" cried Lady Mary, endeavouring to be calm. "Edith, don't you know whether you are doing right?"

"No," Edith answered her drearily. "Oh, aunty," she cried almost hysterically, "I feel sometimes as if I were doing wrong!"

"Child! Daisy! you are unwell, do not think of such things. You have never been right since that night you were frightened so."

"I must think. I think of such things when I am in the best of health. How can we do right, aunt, if we do not think?"

"Is Mr. Pulsford then distasteful to you, Edith? He has been so patient, and I am sure always so anxious to please. The Dean speaks well of him."

"All that makes me feel myself unworthy of him."

"Unworthy, Edith? You puzzle me—that is nonsense."

"Ought one to marry, aunty; without love?"

"It depends," said Lady Mary, with matter-of-fact precision.

"Oh, aunty, but ought one to be actuated by any other motive than pure disinterestedness? You wish me to marry Mr. Pulsford—I know it is the goodness of your heart—but would he be satisfied afterwards?"

"He should be."

"But will he? Oh, aunty, I had a horrible dream last night. I did not tell you. I dreamed that I was in a narrow pass, and Mr. Pulsford was with me, and he had discovered what my feelings really were towards him. I cannot forget the disappointment that clouded his face; it was not despair, it was more like reproach. How it seems to haunt me. And the rocks above me began to close in, and he could not come with me, although I felt safe. He seemed to be carried backward by some powerful force, until he dissolved away, the expression of his face becoming more and more mournful—a hand clasped mine—"

"And what then?" cried Lady Mary, carried away.

"I awoke."

Lady Mary wondered if behind the hand there was another person, and if the person was some one Edith was not disposed to speak of.

"My dear," said Lady Mary, "if you have had all these wretched doubts, why did you not tell me sooner?"

"I never seemed to have the courage."

"It has gone so far," lamented Lady Mary, "you can scarcely break with him now. What would every one say? Edith, you must not brood over these fancies, they are unhealthy. My poor girl, you want change of scene; you will be better when other interests crowd upon you."

Edith shook her head unconvinced.

"I don't know whether I am acting justly towards Mr. Pulsford. It is as if I were concealing something from him he ought to know."

Lady Mary began to think that if older people had been less prominent, these two would have come together with less restraint; the older people had not had any tact at all.

"What have you to conceal?" exclaimed Lady Mary quickly. "Edith, many women marry and are happy wives and mothers, and their marriages have been the results of sound common sense, not of romance. Any woman will do for a man if she will only take the trouble to make herself agreeable. It is proper in our station that parents or guardians should exercise some authority and judgment when such a weighty affair as marriage is concerned. I have thought it over. Your engagement with Mr. Pulsford is in my opinion a solid one. He is steady and clever, and if your home will not be a pretentious one, you will be under a good man's protection, safe under the shelter of a husband's roof."

"Oh, aunty, I know you have done all for the best, and I am only an ungrateful girl. But ought I not to tell him my doubts, the real state of my feelings towards him?"

"No!" said Lady Mary, shrugging her shoulders. "What would be the good? Whatever would you have? No, do not sow doubt. If you are wise you will never suffer him to have a suspicion that you ever harboured any doubt of your disposition to be comfortable with him."

"It seems to me that careful though I may be, my lack of complete trust or sympathy, or whatever it is, must insensibly discourage him."

"You are talking nonsense now, Edith. You must have a week from the Deanery; go out, fresh air will brace you up, the change will—"

"Here is a note for Miss Edith," said Davison, a twisted note reposing in her apron, which she held hammock-wise.

"It is from the Dean," said Lady Mary.

"No," replied Edith, with an undefinable chill at her heart, "it is from Mr. Pulsford."

"Oh," returned Lady Mary graciously. She had a desire in her heart to learn the contents. Perhaps Edith would be warmed to the writer.

A moment later Edith raised her head, bewildered, anxious. Lady Mary became more curious. What was there in the note to occasion such apparent perplexity?

"What does he say?" asked Lady Mary. "What is it all about, eh?"

"I cannot make anything of it, aunty. I cannot understand it. Read it, aunt."

Lady Mary read aloud:

"Dear Miss Heron:

"I am under the necessity of informing you that circumstances compel me to defer my class to an indefinite period.

"Yours truly,

"Herbert Pulsford."

"Nor can I understand it," admitted Lady Mary; "no more at least than that he wishes to acquaint you that you will not have to go down to help him for the present."

"He must have been called away."

"Well, my dear," said Lady Mary reassuringly, "no doubt he will explain when we see him again. When one writes a note in a hurry one is not always so clear as one should be, or else we think we cannot enter into details on paper."

But Edith was still perplexed. The note was clear enough in all conscience. But the "indefinite period?" Something seemed to lie beyond. Was he thinking of giving up class teaching, or was he called away and did not know when he should return? Had he offended the Dean, or had Dr. Olde returned and some unpleasantness occurred? Other wild conjectures floated through Edith's brain. She thought had he been going away for a time, short or long, he would have mentioned it to her, had he found it impossible to get down to the house. People often use the word "indefinite" when they are loth to be direct, shirking unpleasant explanations, or fearing them. *Sine die* carries with it a flavour of honesty, certainty almost. The tenor of his note was cold and distant. She wondered if really he had gone away, intending never to return, and it was his way of breaking off the engagement, rude and abrupt though it might be. She became hot and cold with the thought. She had a little dignity and regard for proprieties, although she felt that she could not complain if he were gone; that she would be relieved; she had not been able to simulate affection.

He was perhaps discouraged and wished to retire, and no other course presented itself to his mind. She was only sorry, if it were so, that the understanding had not been arrived at in a less brusque fashion. Then she felt herself culpable; placing constructions on his actions; she had thought meanly of him on previous occasions and found herself in the wrong. Oh, he would return, she said to herself, and she decided that then she would satisfy her own scruples or have them finally removed.

If Mr. Pulsford was held back from breaking away because of sensitive considerations, fear of wounding her, delicacy, she, by taking the initiative, would end all doubts, and if he wished to be at liberty she would release him.

Then the question and the doubt recurred again: "Had he gone? Would he return?"

(To be continued.)

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

BY CHARLES WORTE.

FOR more than two thousand years the holly and mistletoe have annually at this season of the year reigned in every British household. Poor, indeed, must be the family that does not make some attempt at decoration in honour of the joyful season. Notwithstanding the antiquity of the custom, but little is known of the rise and progress of its sovereignty. In large cities it is not always possible to obtain the orthodox holly and mistletoe; there are seasons when the latter is scarce and consequently dear, and the holly almost destitute of berries, though that will not be the case this year. We have, therefore, to be content with other evergreens; and we must say that we have seen some very effective displays in which branches of the box, laurel, and laurestinus have played a prominent part. It must be confessed, though, that no evergreen is so well adapted for the purposes of decoration as the holly; its leathery spinous glittering leaves do not quickly fade, and the effect of its scarlet berries against the dark green leaves is very charming.

The custom of decking houses with holly boughs is one of great antiquity, and is most probably derived from the Romans, who received branches of trees from their friends during the festival of Saturnalia. The early Christians were not above adopting some of the simple pagan customs of the people by whom they were surrounded, and incorporating them with the tenets of their faith. Houses and temples were decorated on certain festivals with holly at this period, and the early Christian Churches selected Christmas as the most appropriate season for linking the pretty custom to their faith. Most of our own churches are now very tastefully decorated; great has been the excitement among the young ladies of the various congregations, by whom this pleasing duty is generally undertaken, for a week or two past, respecting the form and idea that the decorations shall take. A few highly-favoured young gentlemen are admitted on sufferance to these meetings, and eventually to the church on the final evenings to wait on the young ladies and lend a helping hand wherever it may be required.

The mistletoe is, we believe, excluded from the evergreens used for these decorations; perhaps on account of its early association with the heathenish rites of the Druids, or, more possibly, because of its close connection with Christmas merriment, as it would be likely to awaken remembrances but little favourable to devotion.

In the olden days the holly was called holme and hulver; holly is a corruption of holy tree, a name given to it by the monks of old to commemorate its use in decorating churches. In the West of England it is still called holme; on a part of Dartmoor there is an abundant growth of it, called from this circumstance Holme Chase.

In Norfolk it is often called hulver, a name older than the time of Chaucer, which it has been suggested is derived from the Saxon "hold fair," on account of its keeping its beauty the whole year through. The holly is one of the native trees of the woods and forests of Great Britain. We call it tree advisedly, for in some favourable situations it often attains to the height of forty feet.

Near Frensham, in Surrey in what is known as the Holly Walk, some very fine specimens are to be seen with quite large trunks; and in Needwood Forest, in Staffordshire, the holly trees have long been celebrated for their rare size and beauty. It flourishes well in Scotland also; in the woods of Dumbartonshire there are holly trees quite thirty feet high. It is exceedingly hardy, and will thrive where no other tree would be able to withstand the wintry blasts. Many a hardy holly is scattered over moorlands and on bleak headlands where no human hand could have ever planted them; here, in spite of the terrible storms to which they are subjected, they grow to a considerable height and serve as landmarks to sailors or to lonely wanderers across the pathless moors.

Near the old Castle at Dover, in the graveyard of the church where our forefathers worshipped when the Gospel was first preached in this country, a holly tree has been planted in memory of the Iron Duke. This tree will in all probability thrive for many generations after those who planted it have been laid beneath the sod, although on that bleak spot probably no other tree would survive through a single winter the storms that beat on it both from land and sea.

Being exceedingly durable, as well as hardy and ornamental, it has always been used for making hedges; and, although of somewhat slow growth, no better could probably be found. It takes about twenty years to make a really good holly hedge; in that time it will have attained the height of about fourteen feet, and if carefully tended, will then not only be impervious to cattle and unclimbable by man, but an object of beauty the whole year round. There are holly hedges now flourishing and in good condition that have been planted for more than a hundred and fifty years.

"Glittering with arm'd and varnish'd leaves,
Secure 'gainst weather, beasts, and thieves."

Every one knows that the leaves on the oldest or lower branches of the tree are armed with stiff thorny spikes as sharp as needles, whereas the young leaves on the topmost branches are almost destitute of spikes. Linnaeus very ingeniously accounted for this by suggesting that the thorns were given to the leaves as a protection from browsing cattle, and that those out of reach consequently did not need them. The explanation is really much simpler; it is only with age that the holly leaves acquire stiffness, being quite pliable in their infancy; the thorns are there all the same, but in an incipient stage. Southey falls into the same error when he says—

"Below a circling fence its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen.
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear."

There are several varieties of holly, some with gold and silver variegated leaves, and some with yellow berries; but to our thinking there is none more beautiful or more ornamental than a well-grown specimen of the common variety; with its dark green leaves and its profusion of scarlet berries, it is one of the most striking objects of the winter woodlands.

The mistletoe was considered by the Druids of old, when found growing upon the oak, as a gift sent from heaven, and as showing that the god whom they served had chosen that tree. We know but very little about the Druids or their customs, or religious rites, though their monuments are scattered over our country as remains of their worship. The oak was considered a sacred tree, and many of their religious ceremonies were performed in groves composed of this tree only; and no sacrifices or sacred rite ever took place anywhere without a plentiful supply of oak boughs and leaves. It must be distinctly noted, however, that the mistletoe is so very rarely found growing upon the oak that when discovered upon that tree it may be looked upon as a great curiosity. The Society of Arts once offered a prize for the discovery of mistletoe growing upon the oak; one specimen only was sent from an oak tree growing in Gloucestershire.

The Druids practised many devout ceremonies at the cutting of the mistletoe, which are described by Pliny; and Drayton, many years afterwards, relates in his "Poly-olbion"—

"The fearless British priests, under the aged oak,
Taking a milk-white ball unstained with the yoke,
And with an axe of gold, from that Jove-sacred tree
The mistletoe cut down."

The connection of this plant with the most ancient traditions of Scandinavia and other European countries invests it with a peculiar interest derived from association.

In the good old times the gathering of the mistletoe on Christmas Eve was carried out with great ceremony; it was borne home in state, and hung in the hall amidst loud shouts and great rejoicings;—

"On Christmas-eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas-eve the mass was sung;
The damsel don'd her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dress'd with holly green;
Forth to the woods did merry men go
To gather in the mistletoe:
Then open'd wide the baron's hall,
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all."

The mistletoe and its companions appear to have been retained in their places as ornaments until Candlemas-day, the 2nd of February.

The mistletoe bough, with its yellowish-green leaves and clear pearl-like berries, is not unfrequently to be met with in the winter woodlands. The apple tree, however, is its favourite, and it is more common upon this tree than any other. It is also found growing upon the hazel, hawthorn, ash, maple, lime, and pear tree. We remember some years ago, in Surrey, to have seen some lime trees that were completely destroyed by this parasite.

Mosses and lichens are often erroneously called parasites, because they do not derive their sustenance from the plant or tree upon which they grow, but from the moisture of the atmosphere and from the decayed vegetable matter contained in the crevices of the branches. But the mistletoe is a true parasite; no one has yet succeeded in making it take root in the earth. It inserts its roots to the very centre of the branch upon which it grows, and, like a vampire, feeds on the life-blood of the tree. If when the berries are fully ripe, they are pressed on the branch of almost any

tree, the viscid juice will cause them to adhere, and they will produce plants the next year, the roots of which will be found to strike inwards. Darwin very ingeniously accounts for this on the principle that the leaf buds being stimulated by air and the roots by moisture, each elongates itself where it is most excited.

The Druids ascribed great medicinal properties to the mistletoe, particularly if it grew on the oak, when it was efficacious in all kinds of diseases. Pliny says they called it "all-heal." It has long since been eliminated from our pharmacopœia, and the properties once attributed to it are remembered only as bygone superstitions.

In Germany and Scandinavia the magical properties of this plant are to a certain extent still believed in, and if a hunter only hold a piece in his hand it is thought to be certain to ensure success in the chase.

Both the holly and the mistletoe were formerly considered efficacious against spells and enchantments; the former, planted about a house, was a counter-charm against witchcraft, and the latter was a charm for many diseases.

In this country it is considered still to have a certain charm, and there is a rite yet practised, we believe, in remote districts beneath the mistletoe's mystical bough that has been handed down to us by our Saxon forefathers. This pleasing ceremony originated when the plant was dedicated to Friga, the Saxon Venus. We hope mistletoe will be plentiful this year, and that all our readers will prove worthy descendants of their Saxon ancestors, whose health should assuredly be drunk in a bumper in remembrance of their institution of so pleasant a ceremonial.

WAS HE A FOOL?

BY EVELYN FLETCHER.

CHAPTER II.

"MILLS, dear, let us take those horrid books out of doors. It's a sin and a shame to box oneself up in the house such weather as this."

Thus I, to my worthy governess, one fine morning some three weeks after the departure of Aunt Constance for the sunny south.

Miss Mills looked up with an expression of doubt on her kindly old face.

"But you know, my dear, you never do any work when we take the books out of doors," she said, deprecatingly. "You always find so much to distract your attention, and I, for my part"—she paused, catching herself up on the very brink of a candid acknowledgement of the one human weakness that no rational being will ever own to.

"And you, for your part, always go to sleep," I retorted, mercilessly. "Never mind if you do. It's German to-day, so I can just read over some of those old scenes in 'Wallenstein'; I nearly know them by heart, so I'm not likely to get very wrong, and reading them aloud will improve my accent any way. Do say 'yes,' like a good old Mills;" and Mills struck, doubtless, with the force of my reasoning,

consented to transfer the scene of my studies to the little wood, where I fondly hoped it might be tolerably cool and shady, though the thermometer was then standing at 89 in the schoolroom.

"Now you just show me how much I'm to read," I said, giving her the book, as soon as we had established ourselves luxuriously on the grass, just under a low hedge that separated the wood from the fields that lay beyond. "Mark where I am to go to," I added, "and I'll read it all aloud, whether you go to sleep or not."

She gave me back my book, pointing out the scenes she wished me to read; and then, pulling her knitting out of her pocket, began one of those interminable stockings at which she was for ever wearily working.

A silence ensued; broken only by the monotonous click of her restless needles, and the rustling sound of the paper, as I turned over the leaves of my "Wallenstein."

"Why do you not begin, my dear?" she asked, when some minutes had elapsed.

Miss Mills," I said, solemnly; "are you aware that the portion of German appointed for this morning's reading is taken from the III. Act of 'The Piccolomini,' III., IV., and V. scenes?"

"Yes, my dear," she said, looking up in mild surprise. "What of that?"

"Only that it comprises all that is most idiotically spooney in the idiotic and spoony 'episode' of Max and Thekla. Those young people annoy me. Who wants to be bothered with their silly little loves in a grand play like 'Wallenstein'?"

"I don't quite agree with you, Flora; but allowing you are right what then?"

Miss Mills, do you really want me to read all that stuff?"

"Stuff," my dear? It is beautiful. When I was your age I did not consider love-making 'stuff'!"

"Nor do I—if it's in English!"

I began to read, and waded conscientiously through Max's conversation with Aunt Terzky. I was hot, and in no mood to sympathize with the young fellow's raptures, which bored me as they had, no doubt, previously bored Wallenstein's worthy, but designing, sister. I didn't wonder that lady committed suicide! In her place, I should have done the same.

For some minutes Miss Mills's needles clicked with great regularity, then they gradually slackened, and at last grew still.

I looked up: Miss Mills' head had fallen on her left shoulder, while her yellow sun-bonnet and dust-coloured front had a decided tendency in the direction of her right ear; the needles were lying, idle, in her lap; Max and Thekla, Aunt Terzky, and the German language with all its gutturals, and all its love-making, were alike forgotten. Miss Mills was fast asleep.

I grinned a ghastly grin, and returned to Max, and his raptures.

Try as I would, I could not keep my attention fixed on the book in my hand. My thoughts would wander off in all directions, and it was useless to attempt to recall them. At length a gorgeous peacock butterfly, flitting over the hedge, carried them with him in his flight across the fields, where the corn had turned to gold, but the poppies were all withered. The skylark next

caught up my wandering thoughts, and bore them with him a little way towards heaven, only to let them "flutter to earth once more," alighting on the stile by the green lane, and my first meeting with Mr. Marston on that bright July morning, three weeks ago.

I suppose my thoughts were tired at last, for they didn't wander far after that.

Our first meeting had been followed by many others, and loyally had we both kept our promise of mutual consolation. I had long ago introduced him to Miss Mills, and given him the opportunity, of which, however, he had not availed himself—of apologizing to her for his misappropriation of her name: and she had often made a quiet, unobtrusive third at our chance meetings. Our meetings, be it understood, were always chance meetings, and we met every day.

Miss Mills liked Mr. Marston; he was always unusually gentle and courteously attentive in his manner towards her, and the worthy old lady appreciated it. I, as Aunt Constance always assured her, was a "mere child," so there was no need for her to disquiet herself on my account—as she might otherwise have done—and I was suffered as usual to take my own course.

Moreover, it soon appeared in the course of conversation that Mr. Marston (who was in the army) had met my father in India, and seen a good deal of him. As I had never before met anyone who knew my father, this alone would have made me hail him as a friend if he had been the veriest old Indian that ever ate curry; but when, in addition to this, he was young, amiable, and handsome, no wonder that I felt disposed to welcome him as a man and a brother.

And three weeks ago I had never even seen him. How much may happen in three weeks!

Thus thinking, I felt little inclination to return to the cultivation of my German accent, but my promise was staring me in the face out of Miss Mills' yellow sun-bonnet, and dust-coloured front, and the thing must be done.

Slowly and sadly I took up the book that had fallen on the grass at my feet, and slowly and sadly I began to read.

Inquisitive sunbeams, glinting through the trees, danced upon the page as I read; but I would not suffer them to distract my attention from the fulfilment of my promise.

There was a scrambling noise, and a sound of rustling branches in the hedge behind me; but I never raised my eyes from my book.

Then a shadow fell over the page, and the merry sunbeams were blotted out.

So I looked up; and saw Mr. Marston, in the very act of breaking through my uncle's hedge.

"Beware!" I said, warningly. "Trespassers will be prosecuted."

How glad I was to see him!

"There was a gap in the hedge," he said, apologetically. "I heard your voice apparently raised in lamentation, and I couldn't resist the temptation of just looking over to see what you were after. It looks so jolly down there. May I join you?"

"Yes, of course: but come softly. Respect the slumbers of the venerable Mills."

So he scrambled down the bank, and threw himself on the grass at my feet with a sigh of relief.

"How deliciously cool it is here? I say, child, you haven't a bad idea of making yourself comfortable." A pause, during which he contemplated the sky, and I my book. He resumed, after a few minutes, his desultory conversation—with this gratifying announcement, "Do you know I wanted particularly to see you this morning."

"Did you?" I said, carelessly. "Why?"

"It's a long story," thoughtfully. "I don't quite know where to begin."

I thought of my promise.

"Don't begin anywhere just yet, please," I felt constrained to say. "I can't attend to you now."

"Hum, that's discouraging for a beginner," he returned, looking somewhat disconcerted. "What on earth are you doing?"

I held up my book. "Reading this."

"Can't it wait?"

"Utterly impossible! I've promised Miss Mills to read all this while I'm out, and I mustn't attend to anything else till it's done."

"But I'll put it straight with Miss Mills. I wish you'd listen to me for a few minutes"

"When I've done," I said, firmly, "I'll listen to you with pleasure. Till then, I won't hear a word."

A perverse spirit of contradiction had taken possession of me. I was just in the mood to tease him.

He raised himself on his elbow, and spoke earnestly—more earnestly than I had ever yet heard him speak.

"Good heavens, child! do you mean to say you won't let me tell you—." I put my fingers in my ears, "I tell you, I won't hear a word! Would you have me break my promise?"

"Why—no: I suppose not," he admitted, reluctantly. "How long are you likely to be?"

"Can't tell at all," I cheerfully assured him. "Perhaps half-an-hour, perhaps hours. It just depends. If you like to wait till I'm at leisure, you can wait; if you'd rather not, you can go. You see there are several courses open to you, Mr. Marston, so please consult your own inclinations, and don't consider me in the matter."

"I'll wait," said he, resignedly. "There's nothing else to be done;" and he resumed his former recumbent position on the grass.

So I took up my parable, and read on to the end of the third scene in a cheerful and utterly expressionless manner: then I paused, and glanced at my companion with some curiosity.

He had not followed the example of the venerable Mills, peacefully slumbering not ten paces off; but he had succumbed to another temptation that would have had no attraction for my worthy governess.

No, his eyes were wide open, and he was employing them—I hope to his own satisfaction—in staring at me in the most undisguised way in the world. It was too much. I could stand a good deal, but I couldn't stand that.

"What on earth are you staring at?" I asked, sharply.

"You," he returned at once, with great simplicity.

"Don't you know it's rude to stare?"

"I have heard so, but I can't help it."

"You can't help being rude!" very severely.

"I can't help being rude—sometimes. It's a way I have."

"Then I think it's a very bad way, and you'd better mend it."

"How?" with a smile, expressive of considerable amusement.

"Stare at the sky instead," I advised him, promptly: "if you must stare at something. It's much better worth it."

"I did for some time, but the sky was so bright it hurt my eyes. So I looked at you for a change."

"Thank you!" very sarcastically. "I may be dull, but I'm not too dull to see what you imply."

"Then you are certainly brighter than I am," he said, quietly. "For I didn't know that I implied anything."

He looked so deliciously cool and comfortable as he lay there on the grass that I felt most reasonably annoyed. Why was he to enjoy himself in that irritatingly lazy manner, while I, sitting bolt upright in the path of duty, grew hot, and bothered over my German? What could I do to spoil that complacent coolness of his?

Suddenly a bright idea struck me. I immediately seized, and appropriated it to my own uses; and under the guise of kindness sought to destroy his peace.

"Tell you what," I said, thoughtfully. "It isn't good for you to lie there doing nothing all day. Come here, and help me improve my German accent."

"All right," he said, rising with an alacrity that could not fail to lessen my displeasure. "How am I to set about it?"

"We will read alternately," I informed him, condescendingly. "You take a speech and I take a speech all the way through. We can share the book comfortably if you sit here by me."

"I propose an amendment," he interrupted me, just as we were about to begin. "You take 'Thekla,' and I 'Max,' all through. That will be more interesting."

"Oh, yes! And how about the aunt?"

"Oh, bother; I forgot all about her! I have it, though! Let's divide her as we go along."

So we started, nowise daunted by the ghastly fate that awaited Aunt Terzky on our progress. Mr. Marston's accent was good, and he read well and dramatically. Max's impassioned speeches took a new meaning as he rendered them: for the first time in my life I dimly felt their beauty—I began to realize that there might be fascination even in German love-making.

I felt the charm of listening to a Max like this, and did my best to make Thekla respond properly to his earnest pleading. I became entirely absorbed in my part, and by the time we had got rid of Aunt Terzky, and had arrived at the last speech, I was just in the mood to give it "con expressione." It was the speech Coleridge thus renders—doing, as I think, but little justice to its beauty:—

"Are we not happy now? Art thou not mine?
Am I not thine? There lives within my soul
A lofty courage—'tis love gives it me!
I ought to be less open—ought to hide
My heart more from thee—so decorum dictates.
But where in this place couldst thou seek for truth,
If in my mouth thou didst not find it?"

Then, like a fool, I raised my eyes to his, carried

away by the emotion I had endeavoured to portray ; and—blushed ridiculously when I found how tenderly the late Max was regarding me.

He, too, had no doubt become completely absorbed in his part, to the temporary extinction of his own private and personal identity. I laughed, partly at the absurdity of the idea, and partly in confusion at having been caught in the very act of blushing.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, vaguely. I don't know what he meant, and I didn't ask him. Indeed, I doubt whether he knew himself.

"I've no more reading to do now," I remarked, after a few minutes' reflection. "Hadn't you something you wanted to speak to me about? Allow me to suggest that 'now's your time.'"

"I do wish to speak to you about something," he answered, gravely—so gravely that I looked up at him in surprise. "And I wish, first of all, to tell you something, Miss Spencer. I am going away."

"Going away!" I repeated, in blank astonishment. "You!" It seemed so strange that I could scarcely believe it, even though I heard the words from his own lips.

"Yes," he said, watching me, as I felt, intently while he spoke: my eyes were fixed on the ground for fear he should discover the tears in them. Well, well; he was like a brother to me: what matter if he did see them? I looked up and spoke as steadily as I could.

"When are you going, Mr. Marston?"

"This afternoon. At once."

Try as I would, I could not suppress a little cry of dismay.

"Oh! that is soon! And are you going for long?" And in my eagerness I laid my hand on his arm.

He smiled a little. "Not for long, as time goes under ordinary circumstances; it seems long to me just now," and, as he spoke, he carefully took the small brown hand from his arm, and held it in both his own.

"But how long?" I persisted, politely ignoring the existence of any such act of unlawful possession.

"About a fortnight."

I sprang up angrily, and snatched away my hand. What did he mean by playing me such a trick, and possessing himself of it and my sympathies on false pretences.

"Why, Mr. Marston," I exclaimed, indignantly; "what a fuss about nothing! A fortnight! I thought you were going for a year at least. How ridiculous!" And I began to laugh: I felt so relieved.

He looked surprised, and a little hurt. "You don't mind my going for a fortnight, then? Ah, child, would you care a little if I had been going for a year?"

Before I had time to answer him, before I had even made up my mind whether to answer him or not, I was interrupted by a sudden snort behind me. I turned hastily.

Miss Mills was just beginning to emerge from the deep and overwhelming sleep into which she had unconsciously fallen. The spectacle of her struggles on these occasions always had a strange fascination for me, and I now looked on with considerable interest, not doubting that my companion was doing the same.

First she made one or two sudden plunges in her efforts to extricate herself, in the course of which the yellow sun-bonnet, and dust-coloured front descended precipitately over her nose, and obscured that feature. Next, there followed a deep-drawn, gurgling sigh; then another; and then—Miss Mills awoke.

Pushing the sun-bonnet and front on one side, she looked round, and smiled idiotically; then she rubbed her eyes, but checked herself suddenly, as though the act were in itself a confession. Then she looked round again, and shivered slightly; and then she arose.

"Dear me, it has grown quite chilly in the last few minutes. Flora, we will return to the house, and you can finish your reading there."

"I've done it, Mills dear. Thanks to Mr. Marston," I added mischievously, turning to look for him.

I looked in vain: he was gone.

He had never even waited for me to bid him good-bye! True, it was only for a fortnight, and it would have been absurd to make a fuss about it, but yet—yet—

Miss Mills looked at me with astonishment, which gradually gave place to a certain kindly scorn and gentle pity as what she imagined to be the true explanation of the matter presented itself to her weak but amiable mind. So she said, with a compassionate smile,—

"Mr. Marston, Flora? He has not been here. You have been asleep, my dear, and dreaming. Do you think he could have come without *my* seeing him. Come, we will return to the house."

I picked up my book and followed her, without a word. I didn't attempt to set her right; I didn't attempt to justify myself. Where was the good?

He was gone; and if it was only for a fortnight in actual miserable uninteresting days, it was none the less for ever as concerned the pleasant dream of the last three weeks. In a few days my aunt would return, and even if she did not trouble herself about me—which was in itself unlikely if she once discovered that any one else did! I felt that our meetings could never be the same again.

Until this morning I had been a child despite my seventeen years, and was happy in the thoughtlessness of childhood; but now that blissful state of unconsciousness was past. I felt years older as I walked back to the house.

"If I had been a child this morning," I thought, sadly; "I was a woman now, and a very old and experienced one, too!" I could never sit on stiles any more, and hold cheerful conversation with passers-by. In the first rush of the reaction I felt as though I could never be young and foolish any more, but that, unfortunately for my few friends, was an impression that didn't last long. "It isn't that I'm in love, or anything of that sort," I said to myself, thoughtfully: "but I am a woman now, and things are different, and Mr. Marston has gone away, and I'm very unhappy." That was how my regrets for my lost youth always ended. Start in whatever direction I might, that was the new and startling conclusion at which I always arrived, sooner or later; and for the next few days it was wonderfully consoling to me to follow out that edifying train of thought, always hailing the conclusion with all the enthusiastic interest that attaches to an entirely original idea.

Before long, however, "a change came o'er the spirit of my dream," and this change occurred on the very day of my aunt's return. The afternoon was hot, and Miss Mills, having seen that all the preparations for the travellers' reception were complete, was slumbering peacefully in the schoolroom. So I took up my book, and went out into the garden.

There was a certain comfortable seat cut into the hedge that separated my uncle's garden from the vicar's. I had that seat in mind's eye, as I left the house. Slowly and sedately, as befitted a woman of my years, I proceeded to it, and climbing up (for it was a seat of the rustic order, and approached by steps), sat down, and prepared to revel in doleful reminiscences of the past.

The usual train of thought was followed, with the usual gratifying results; it was followed again, somewhat drowsily, for the weather was overpoweringly hot, until at last, during the third repetition, I fairly drifted into a deep sleep;

"And a dream came slowly nigh me, all my thoughts and fancy leading
Across the bounds of waking life, to the other side."

I saw some funny thing on the other side, too!

I thought that I was in the little wood again, reading "Wallenstein," with dear old Mills sitting opposite to me in the yellow sun-bonnet and dust-coloured front just as usual. Moreover, to complete the reality of the thing, she was fast asleep. Mr. Marston was on the grass beside me, reading aloud very dramatically, but in a voice that was strangely like my aunt's. I thought he was reading Max's speeches, only that I never remembered to have observed before what a really remarkable resemblance they bore to certain humorous extracts from the "Book of Nonsense." I came to Thekla's last speech, and read tenderly the following words:—

"There was a young lady said, 'How
Shall I flee from this horrible cow?
I will sit on a stile, and continue to smile,
Which will soften the heart of this cow.'"

Then I looked up, with a vague sense that something ought to happen, and—beheld Mr. Marston regarding me curiously, through a large double eye-glass. This did not surprise me in the least; he was quite welcome to look at me through a telescope if it would afford him any satisfaction, but surely it was a little odd that he should do so from under the shadow of Miss Mills' yellow sun-bonnet and dust-coloured front? How had he come into possession of those invaluable items of her wardrobe, and by what right was he wearing them? I didn't know; but there they undoubtedly were on his head, and he looked so odd in them that I couldn't help laughing, though I felt that it was rude to do so. Then he frowned horribly, and said, still in my aunt's voice, "What a mere child you are!" This made me so angry that I threw "Wallenstein" at his head, but instead of hitting him it changed into a large butterfly, and went flying on and on, right over the hedge into the vicar's garden; and I heard the vicar's wife exclaim, "Oh, what a beautiful insect! It comes from India;" and with her voice still ringing in my ears—I awoke, and behold it was a dream!

All but the shrill voice of Mrs. Roberts, the vicar's wife. That was still present with me when

I sat up, and rubbed my eyes, and still talking about India.

"Yes," I heard her say; "in India; he has been there for years."

"Indeed?" said another voice, that I did not recognize. "Ah, that quite accounts for it. I thought she must have been another daughter."

"You have never seen her, I suppose?" Mrs. Roberts continued; "I thought not. She is such a different type of girl from her cousin, that you could hardly take them for sisters; though, to be sure, sisters are often very unlike."

"I have only heard of her from my son," was the answer; "he met her once, and described her to me as a pretty little girl with golden hair and great grey eyes. Very young, is she not?"

"She is young," Mrs. Roberts admitted; "but not so young as her aunt likes to imagine her. The fact is, my dear Mrs. Marston, Mrs. Spencer can't help seeing what a contrast there is between the girls, and so she doesn't choose to have them about together, but keeps poor Flora shut up in the schoolroom. I would not say this to everybody," added the vicar's wife in the confidential tone of which she always made use when talking what might be considered scandal, "in my position I cannot be too careful; but I know it is quite safe with you, Mrs. Marston; and your son has seen her, you say?"

"Yes, he met her out walking one day. It was only from Tom I heard of her."

"Mr. Marston thought her pretty, no doubt? Ah, he would be sure to admire her. I fancy he has met her out walking several times since—quite by accident, of course! Yes, yes! young men will be young men, and she really is excessively pretty. Indeed, I saw them both in the field with Miss Mills the other day. Miss Mills is the governess; a good creature, but growing old; yes, she was with them that day. Do you think your son admires Flora? He has been with her a good deal lately; indeed, I've seen them together constantly."

"I daresay; he has rather a penchant for little girls, and it has been very dull for him at home. How fine your roses are, Mrs. Roberts. This is certainly a good place for flowers."

"I have some much better ones by the house; if you are not tired I shall be quite delighted to show them to you."

"I should very much like to see them." The voices died away in the distance, and I was left alone to meditate on what I had heard.

My reflections were not pleasant. So I was a child in his eyes, too! Only a "little girl" to the man whom I loved with all a woman's love! Yes, I loved him. I knew it at last. That love had changed me from child to woman, and yet to him who had inspired it, I was still the "little girl" of a month ago. "Would no one ever realize that I was capable of development?" I thought bitterly to myself. "Would no one ever acknowledge that I was a woman?"

I had always flattered myself that Mr. Marston regarded me as a sensible companion with whom he could converse on equal ground; and though I had frankly acknowledged to my own heart that he was mistaken in his estimate of me, I had always carefully concealed this from him by every means in my power; while, at the same time, I tried most conscientiously to become more worthy

of his good opinion ; and now to learn that it was all a mistake ! That he had never entertained any opinion of me at all, except the universal opinion that I was a child ! That while I had been learning to love him, he had simply been amusing himself because it was " dull at home ! "

Not that I blamed him for a moment ; he was only like the rest of the world : but it was hard, very hard ! And I took up my book and slowly returned to the house. There was nothing else to be done.

The days that followed my aunt's return were by no means calculated to raise my drooping spirits, and restore the modest confidence in myself that had been so rudely shaken. She was in the mood to be displeased with everybody, and she snubbed me accordingly. Connie was calm and self-contained as usual, and my uncle never had a word to say, and wouldn't have ventured to say it if he had.

The one interest I had in life was an interest that I must force keep to myself, and that I did my best to stifle. But somehow it wouldn't be stifled ; and every morning, as soon as I woke, the same weary question presented itself to my anxious mind, " Has Mr. Marston come home ? " ably seconded by the further inquiry, " Shall I see him to-day ? "

A week passed, and both were still unanswered, when I learnt accidentally that my aunt was going to give a dinner party on the following evening, and that both Mrs. Marston and her son had been invited, and had accepted the invitation.

He was at home then, and yet I had never seen him.

It is true this last fact was hardly to be wondered at, for ever since the day of my aunt's return I had carefully avoided all the places where we used to meet. I never entered the wood now, and the stile knew me no more. It cost me a struggle to make this resolution ; but, once made, I kept it faithfully. But, oh ! I wanted to see him again ! and here he was, actually coming to the house tomorrow, and I as far as ever from any prospect of meeting him—for I had neither lot nor part in my aunt's entertainments. Consistent in this as in everything else, she ordered me off to the schoolroom half an hour before her guests arrived, and I was never supposed to quit it again till I retired to the privacy of my own chamber.

I reflected on all this till it nearly drove me mad, and, after a sleepless night, I took the desperate resolution of appealing to my aunt, and imploring her to let me come into the drawing-room for a little while after dinner, or a few minutes before ; anything, if only she would let me show people that I wasn't sent to bed like a naughty child ! But it was of no use. She didn't seem surprised ; she merely smiled coldly, and said, " Your violence at the present moment certainly justifies me in treating you like a child. I shall not desire your company in the drawing-room, my dear, till you have learnt to control your temper. You may go, Flora." Connie was in the room, and looked up quietly, but made no remark ; and I left them without another word.

I was utterly crushed at last.

The day wore on but there was no improvement in my state of mind—no brightening ray of light visible anywhere on my mental horizon !

The weather even appeared to be affected with

the general depression ; towards evening the sky clouded over, and its pent-up feelings found relief in angry showers of rain. Drearly they pattered against the schoolroom window, and drearily I contemplated them from the ample solitude within. Even old Mills had deserted me, and had gone to spend a few days with her friends. Six o'clock came, but I never stirred ; the schoolroom window looked out on to the drive ; if I liked I might, from where I stood, enjoy the exciting spectacle of the arrival of my aunt's guests, and their descent from their respective carriages. Could I tear myself from the window with such a prospect before ? No !—a thousand times no ! I flattened my nose more pitifully than ever against the cold glass ; but to no purpose ! The expected guests were not expected before seven o'clock, and by that time it was so dark, owing to the sympathetic gloom of the evening, that I could see nothing.

I was just turning away from the window, when Susan, the housemaid, came in to clear the table, on which the remains of my solitary tea were yet reposing in lonely beauty.

" Getting dark, miss, isn't it ? " said Susan, sympathetically. " Dear, 'ow the evennings do draw in ! You'll never be able to see 'em through the window to-night. It is a pity, to be sure ; and the new lady coming and all." She paused for a moment, and then added, confidentially, " I'll tell you what, Miss Flora, I've been thinking that the lamps are lit in the 'all, and the back stairs are in the dark. You might watch 'em cross the 'all from the staircase window, and then you'd see the dresses beautiful, miss ; " and Susan nodded at me encouragingly, and made off with the tray.

It was excellent advice, and I acted on it without a moment's hesitation. I had heard the hall-door bell ring several times already, and I knew there was no time to lose. I left the schoolroom, and made my way stealthily across the landing to the back staircase. It was uncarpeted, so I took the precaution of removing my shoes, and carried them in my hand as I descended the narrow stairs. The window was closed ; I softly opened it and looked down. Immediately below me was the front staircase, with its low, wide steps, leading down into the hall, now brilliantly lighted up. Through the open door on the right I could see a vast expanse of fair white table-cloth, bright with coloured glass and many-tinted flowers. Through the open door on the left I could hear the hum of conversation, broken by an occasional laugh, or varied by the soft sound of the faint feminine giggle.

Dinner was announced ; I drew back, and waited in the dark, my eyes fixed eagerly on the drawing-room door.

Slowly and stately they emerged—two by two, like the animals who enjoyed Noah's hospitality long ago in the ark—from the shadows, and the dimly-lighted drawing-room, into the bright hall below me. I watched them cross the hall.

That march-past was a curious thing to contemplate from afar off ; there were so many different ways of doing it ! Some, for the most part among those who led the van, regarded it simply as means to an end, and just walked to their dinner with a calm satisfaction beautiful to behold. Then there was the shy, middle-aged man

who didn't go out much; he wasn't used to it, and didn't like it; and there was the young fellow, fresh from Oxford, with all his "blushing honours" and unblushing self-assurance, who was uncommonly well-used to it, and did.

There was the forward girl, who had plenty to say on every subject you might happen to mention, and recklessly betrayed her ignorance of the particular subject under discussion with every word she spoke; and the shy girl who had nothing to say on any subject, and giggled perpetually in the awful dread lest other people should detect her shyness. There they all were, and each and all of them had his or her own particular way of walking across that hall—resignedly, carelessly; in lively conversation, in solemn silence; all these and more passed below me, but I looked in vain for Mr. Marston. The last couple had already entered the dining-room, when Connie and he at length appeared in the doorway; talking together earnestly, but in too low a tone for me to hear what they said, they crossed the hall, and paused for a moment at the foot of the stairs. How handsome he looked! Oh, how good it was to see him again!

Secure, as I thought, in the darkness of my hiding-place, I leant forward, resting on the window-sill, and watched them eagerly. I forgot that the light in the hall shone full upon me, I forgot the shoes in my hand: suddenly he looked up; I started back—but it was too late! He had seen me! For one dreadful, delicious moment our eyes had met, and I knew that I had stood revealed to him—tumbled, yellow hair, eager, grey eyes, flushed face, old shoes, and all. If I was "excessively pretty" as that horrid Mrs. Roberts said, Mr. Marston had certainly seen my charms to advantage this time! I should have laughed, had I not been so horribly disgusted; as it was I fled to the schoolroom, and, throwing myself down on the sofa, indulged for ever so long in all sorts of gloomy reflections. Susan had lighted the fire in consideration of the damp, chilly evening, and as I lay there, and watched the flickering lights and shadows dancing on the wall, and listened to the patterning of the rain against the window, I pondered sadly on many things, till my eyes filled with tears, and I murmured with Thekla—

"Ich habe gelebt und geliebet?"

But the love-sick German damsel was happier than I in that her love was returned, while mine—

At this point my reflections were interrupted by a light tap at the door.

Thinking it was Susan, I said, "Come in!" without troubling to look round.

The door opened, and some one entered; but it was not Susan. I raised my eyes and saw Mr. Marston standing before me in the flickering light of the fire!

"You said I might come in," he closed the door as he spoke. "Can I speak to you for a few minutes? There is something I must say to you, and we may be interrupted any moment. Why, child, how ill you look!" he broke off suddenly.

"You are complimentary," I said, with an effort: how hard it was to speak naturally! I had risen, and was standing opposite to him in the bright firelight. I daresay I did look ill, but it was not for him to notice it.

"I am not complimentary! I wasn't thinking

what I said, but I spoke the truth;" he came up to me, and taking my hand looked at me long and earnestly; "you do look ill," he continued, "wretchedly ill; and you've lost your bright colour. What have you been doing to yourself while I have been away?"

I felt the "bright colour" rushing back as he spoke, and turned away hastily. "How rude you are," I said, and my voice trembled in spite of my efforts to speak coldly.

"Am I? I'm very sorry! I didn't mean to be." He paused, and I looked at the fire, wondering what he would say next.

"You haven't answered my question yet!" Again he waited, and again I said never a word. "Have I no right to ask it?" he went on quickly. "Believe me, child, it isn't mere idle curiosity! I want to know what has made you look so white and ill! Haven't you a word to say to me? You used to talk to me freely enough a fortnight ago!"

"If I talked too much a fortnight ago," I cried impetuously, "you should have snubbed me for it, as anybody else would have done. You encouraged me to talk freely, and now—" I stopped as suddenly as I had begun.

"And now," he repeated. "Go on! What now?"

"It is ungenerous of you to remind me of it! If I bored you, you should have told me so at the time." And I walked hastily away to the window.

"Bored you," he said, and then he too stopped. "Good heaven, how little she understands me!" I heard him mutter to himself, as I stood looking steadily out into the darkness.

"Would you mind coming back to the fire," he said presently, "I want to put things straight if I can, and it's a little difficult to make explanations to your back."

"I don't want to hear any explanations," I said shortly, glancing at him over my shoulder.

"But I want to make them."

"Then you may make them to my back."

"As you please;" resignedly. "In that case, I think I'll lessen the respectful distance between us by joining you at the window."

Was he laughing at me? I glanced at him again as he came up; no, he was perfectly serious.

There was a silence, broken only by the patterning of the rain against the glass. We both stood by the window, and looked steadily out into the darkness.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed at last. "I can't stand this any longer. It's too awful! Flora! I must speak out once for all, and you must hear me, and give me a plain answer, too, if you can! You won't tell me what you've been doing for the last fortnight, but I can tell you I've done nothing but long to be back here again! I've thought of you every day, and every hour of the day. I've missed you horribly! Oh, my darling! have you missed me a little?"

He had possessed himself of both my hands by this time, and my waist, too. I let them go; I was too utterly astonished to make the slightest objection.

"You are not angry with me?" he whispered, presently. "You must have known how I loved you. This doesn't surprise you, Flora?" Not in

the least. Nothing could ever surprise me any more.

"Why don't you speak?" he continued, as I made no reply. "Flora, you do love me, don't you? Look up, child; and tell me you will be my own dear little wife?"

What did I say to him? I said nothing.

But I just looked up at him for one little moment, and he was quite satisfied. Perhaps he had heard somewhere that "silence gives consent!"

There was a sound of approaching footsteps, and the rustle of silk on the landing outside; but we neither heard nor heeded.

The door opened, and my aunt came slowly into the room.

"Mr. Marston! you here?" she said, with a sort of deliberate surprise. "And Flora, too! You must be fond of children's society!"

"Mrs. Spencer," he said, quietly; "allow me to explain my presence in this room."

"Quite unnecessary;" and she smiled. "It is very kind of you to pay Flora a visit, I am sure! But you know, my dear," turning to me; "you should not trespass on Mr. Marston's good nature. It is long past nine o'clock."

"Don't blame Flora, Mrs. Spencer. It's all my fault," exclaimed Mr. Marston, before I could say a word. "I wanted to speak to her."

"Really?" incredulously. "Very good of you to give so much time to the child!"

"It's not good at all!" he broke out impetuously. "If she is a child, she's the dearest child in the world, and I love her, and have asked her to be my wife."

"Indeed?" Would nothing ever disturb my aunt's composure?

"Yes, I have; and I think you ought to know it."

"Because, after what I have just seen, it is impossible to deceive me any longer! I thank you. No, Mr. Marston, do not attempt to explain your conduct! I am not so ignorant of what has been going on here for the last month as you appear to think. I have heard how Flora has been amusing herself during my absence, but, knowing what a child she is, I attached no importance to it. Your conduct this evening puts the matter in a new light, and leaves me no alternative——"

"But to own that she is a woman at last, and congratulate us on our engagement," he interposed, with a smile.

"But to request you to leave the house at once, and consider our acquaintance at an end."

There was a moment of awful silence; it was broken by a thundering knock at the hall-door. My aunt, thinking probably upon her neglected guests, turned to leave the room.

Mr. Marston immediately followed her to the door.

"One moment, Mrs. Spencer," he exclaimed. "I cannot accept your decision as final. I shall appeal to your husband."

"My husband never interferes with my decisions," she returned composedly; "but you are quite at liberty to appeal to him."

There was a sound of heavy footsteps ascending the stairs, and a hum of voices talking in the hall below.

"Then, Mrs. Spencer, I shall write to India by the next mail, and refer it to the Major."

The door at this juncture was pushed open.

"What's that about 'writing to India, and referring it to the Major?'" said a short, middle-aged man, entering unceremoniously, and looking round him with an amused smile.

It was my father.

"Oh, papa! papa! how glad I am to see you! and you are only just in time," I cried.

The relief was so great that I fairly burst into tears and sobbed on his shoulder.

"Why, child, what's the matter?" he inquired presently, somewhat astonished at this damp reception. "I'm glad I'm in time; though I haven't the idea what for."

"They were just going to turn him out of the house," I explained; "but you won't let them?"

"Going to turn him out, are they?" said my sorely-puzzled parent thoughtfully. "What's it all about? I can't make head or tail of it."

"Flora has had a foolish flirtation, Major; but it's all over now, and I hope she will be wiser for the future," said my aunt coldly.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" began my father.

"Oh, no, papa; it's not over! She's all wrong! I'm engaged to him!"

"Ah, that sounds serious. Who is the fellow? Is there anything against him?"

"I hope not, Major Spencer," said my lover, stepping forward into the light.

"What, Marston, my dear boy! Is it really you?" And my father wrung his hand warmly.

"And you want to marry my little girl here?"

"Yes, Major; I do."

"Constance, what's your objection to him?"

"I know nothing positive against Mr. Marston," said my aunt slowly. "Indeed, I know very little of him. If he is an acquaintance of yours, you can probably judge for yourself."

"My own opinion exactly," said my father gravely. "I thought well of the boy when I knew him in India, and my good opinion of him is confirmed by meeting him in this house. Take her, Tom, and be a good husband to her!" He was silent for a few minutes; and then added, with a laugh, "So I was just in time to do the whole duty of a father, was I? Queer, I should have turned up to-night, after all these years, at the very moment when you wanted me, Flo?"

Late that evening, I met Connie on the stairs, and she stopped to speak to me.

"So you are engaged to Mr. Marston," she remarked. "I hope you will be happy, Flora."

"Thank you," I said, "and thank you, too, for telling him where to find me."

Connie laughed. "That was not difficult. He betrayed his feelings so plainly when he found you were not in the drawing-room. He really amused me," she added; "and I think mamma went a little too far; so I was anxious to do what I could to help you—disagreeable though I am!"

"Oh, Connie," I said, and my heart smote me. I certainly had thought her disagreeable at times. "Do you remember the first day he called here?" I went on; "you thought he was a fool."

"I remember. Well, my dear, all I can say is, that I have observed nothing in his conduct since that time that could in any way alter my opinion."

"He isn't a fool?" I exclaimed indignantly.

"A thoroughly unprejudiced opinion!" remarked Connie, with a smile. "Good-night."

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LONDON : DECEMBER 26, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE GHOST OF DINA VANDOREN.

BY N. ROBERTSON.

THE following story of an apparition was related to me by a London landlady, to while away an hour of sickness and loneliness. The narrator was a shrewd, clever and honest person.

I will tell the tale as it was told to me.

"Forty years ago, when I was a girl of twenty-two, I went to live as general servant with a Madame Levy, who kept a large milliner's shop at Portsmouth. Madame Levy was a foreigner; I was told afterwards a Belgian. She was an unpleasant person to look at; she was fat and yellow, and cross and cruel-looking. Her husband was a watchmaker, an English Jew, very good-looking in a black and red style, and ten years younger than Madame, who was jealous of him.

"In spite of Madame's cross looks it was not a bad house to live in. There was much coming and going of young people; the ways were free and easy, and there was plenty to eat and drink, and see and hear. So, being young and merry, I liked it.

"I soon found out an odd whim of Madame's; very odd I thought it, though I was glad of it. She never would come down the kitchen stairs. She was a splendid cook and very particular. So she had a cooking stove fixed in a foreign fashion, in one of the upstairs rooms, and when she wanted to show me how to do anything, I had to take the materials up to her, though there was a splendid stove in the front kitchen and everything handy.

"I must tell you what the kitchens were like. It was a big, old-fashioned house, and they were large, with plenty of cupboards and cellars. The back one looked out on to the garden, and was used as a dining-room for the forewoman and three apprentices, and sometimes Mr. Levy would eat there. Madame Levy never came down, as I have said. The front kitchen was only lighted

from a grated area, and was dark and stuffy, and only used for cooking. Between the back kitchen and the front was another room, with a half-glass door and no window at all. The kitchen stairs came down past this glass door, and one could have seen into the room if it had not been for a dirty muslin curtain. After I had been in the house a week I tried to open that door; I was curious to find out what the room was used for; but it was locked and the key was gone. Then I asked Madame Rose (as we called her), the forewoman, about it. She looked at me sharply and said, 'It is a storeroom, and I advise you to let it alone, *ma fille*, if you know what is good for yourself.' She was a Belgian, too, and very thick with Madame Levy. The neighbours did say that that was because she was so ugly—Madame Rose, I mean. She even beat the mistress for plainheadedness, which is saying a good deal. All the workpeople were ugly, too; and the apprentices; you can guess what a party they were when I tell you I was frequently assured that I was far and away the best-looking woman in the house, and I needn't say that I never set up for a beauty.

"It was all out of jealousy of Mr. Levy that Madame took so much pains, and really she must have worked hard before she could have got together such a lot, and in my native country, too. Of course it was not any good; Mr. Levy just stopped out as much as his watchmaking would let him, and so made his wife miserable that way.

"I had been a fortnight settling down and making these discoveries, when one day I was coming down the kitchen stairs with my arms full of things, and happened to glance at the storeroom door. The curtain was lifted at one corner, and a face was pressed against the pane—a young girl's face, very white and sad-looking, and with large blue eyes. I was very frightened; I made no more than one jump into the front kitchen, and threw down my armful of clothes. Then I thought for a minute, and called myself a

fool. Of course Madame had sent one of the young women down to look for something; and as to its being a strange face, why that was nothing, for new workers were often coming and going. What was odd was that the face was pretty.

"I can't tell why, when I had settled this in my own mind, I didn't go forward to the front kitchen about my business; but I didn't. I stood at the table waiting for the pale-faced girl to go up stairs. I could have seen her from my place. Well, I waited five minutes, and ten minutes, and she didn't go, and I couldn't waste any more time. So I went to the other room, and as I passed I tried the storeroom door. It was fast locked as usual. Then I own I was surprised, for if any one had been in there they could not have got upstairs without passing the door of the back kitchen. It came into my head that perhaps Madame had punished one of the apprentices by locking her up there; sometimes she was unkind to them. And though of course I knew the apprentices by sight, still I might have been deceived. I knew the storeroom was dark, and full of mice and blackbeetles, and not a fit place to shut a girl of thirteen into—enough to give her a fit; so I went to the door just to see and hearten the child up, if it was one of them.

"'Miss Prout! Miss Nelly!' I called, and shook the door.

"I must have made more noise than I thought, for Madame Rose heard through the baize door which led into the shop, and came out.

"'What are you doing there, Martha?' she asked quite fiercely.

"'I saw some one in there, Madame, and the door is locked. I thought perhaps it was Miss Prout or Miss Nelly shut in by mistake.'

"'Oh!' she said angrily, and went upstairs.

That afternoon she came to me with a key in her hand.

"'You are curious, Martha, about that room. Now, I am going to show you, once for all, what is in it; and for the future you will let it alone.'

"I got angry, for she sneered at me in her nasty way.

"'I don't want to see. I am not curious, and I did see somebody looking out at the door this morning.'

"'You didn't; because there was nobody there. And look here, my girl, if you want to be bundled out of this house, neck and crop, you'll just let that story come to Madame Levy's ears. You wouldn't be the first by two or three. Now just come.'

"So I was obliged to go and get a candle, and she unlocked the door and showed me a dark and dirty room filled with cobwebs. One side of it was heaped with broken boxes and bits of carpet and refuse half way up the wall, and in one corner was a sort of heap of clothes, with a small hair trunk. And the blackbeetles were running over the floor like mad. 'I shouldn't call it a storeroom,' I said.

"'It used to be a storeroom. Madame Levy doesn't want it now.' She turned the key in the lock. 'And mind what I say; if you want to stay here, don't see more than other people.'

"I went back to my needlework sulkily enough,

but by this time I was beginning to wonder if I hadn't really fancied the face. Somehow at the bottom of my heart I knew I really had seen it, but I did my best to put it out of my head, and as for about a month nothing further happened, I had almost succeeded, when I saw the face again. This time some one else saw it too.

"I had been busy upstairs for a couple of hours and when I came down I found Nelly, the younger apprentice, sitting at the bottom of the stairs, crying, with the key of the storeroom in her hand.

"'Well, Nelly, what's the matter now?' I asked. Nelly was always crying.

"'Oh, Martha! dear Martha! Madame Rose has sent me down to the storeroom to look for something, and I'm afraid to go in.'

"'Well, a great girl like you! afraid of blackbeetles!'

"'It isn't the blackbeetles. Oh, Martha, do go in with me.'

"'Of course I will, gnose. But I should like to know what you are afraid of.' For I had held my tongue about what I had seen, and was not going to begin by frightening silly little Miss Nelly.

"We got a light and went in, and I helped Nelly to pull out from the heap a certain sized box she wanted. As we were turning to go away, Nelly backing out first, the light fell on the heap I had before noticed in the corner. I went up to it; it was a mouldy old mattress lying on the bricks, and covered with a horse-rug.

"'Do come away, Martha!' implored Nelly. So I came. When we got the box outside it proved to be too large and heavy for Nelly to carry alone, and we each took an end. Half-way up the kitchen stairs Nelly stumbled, and we had to put the thing down. As we stood for a moment to breathe, with our faces turned to the storeroom door, a corner of the curtain over the window was lifted, and the same pale unhappy face I had seen looked out at us. I saw it distinctly; the blue eyes and the little pointed chin, and the look of misery. Nelly saw it too, but she could only have had a glimpse; she gave a smothered shriek and fell backwards over the box on to me. Lucky for her that nobody heard her. I had ten minutes work with her in the kitchen, and nothing but her awful fear of Madame Levy would have brought her round then.

"'Oh, did you see her, Martha? Did you see her?'

"I thought it best to pretend I hadn't. So I asked her what she meant.

"'Dina Vandoren,' she sobbed. 'That was Dina Vandoren. Oh! they said her ghost was in the storeroom. Oh! I wish I was out of this house. What shall I do?'

"I was very curious and very much scared I must own; but for Nelly's sake I joked and laughed, and then pretended to be angry with her. At last I gave her some brandy I had, and got her to go upstairs, where Madame scolded her so for being gone half-an-hour that she had a fair excuse for going into hysterics, and did it.

"Well, I was frightened, I must own. For twice I had certainly seen some one look out of that storeroom window when the door was locked, and in the last case I had just seen that the place was empty. But I was not too frightened to act, and

I determined somehow or other to get hold of that key and examine the room for myself. It took me a long while and a lot of manoeuvring; I needn't tell you all that; but at last, one Sunday afternoon, I got the key into my pocket, and Madame Rose went off for her outing with another very much like it in hers. The house was empty; I lit a couple of candles and went in, feeling very creepy and horrid, I must own. I moved a lot of the boxes, looking over my shoulder now and then, and found nothing. Then I looked at the mattress. It had lain where it was, in the damp, for two or three years at least, I should say. At the bottom of it stood a small hair-trunk open—that is, unlocked. I looked into it; it was full of shabby bits of clothes that I would have scorned to wear even when they were new. I had got up a bit of courage, and I pulled them up, and found underneath them a sort of prayer-book in French, with pictures of saints in it. On the first page was written—

Dina Vandoren,
St. Gilles-lez-Bruxelles,

and a date. I've got a good memory, and I remember the words, foreign though they were.

"I put the book back; somehow I began to feel more and more creepy; but I had made up my mind to make sure that no one could get in except through the door, and I made sure. The walls were sound, and so was the brick flooring. As for the roof, the shop extended above the three basement rooms. Then I was sure it was a vision I had seen.

"I began to feel very curious about Dina Vandoren; Miss Nelly probably knew something, as she was a Portsmouth girl, but she was frightened out of her life to tell me. I tried again and again to coax her, but she would not. She said Madame would kill her if she knew she had talked about Dina Vandoren, and I really think she believed it. At last, one day when every one else was out, I got Nelly alone in the kitchen, and she told me this much:—

"'Dina Vandoren was a Belgian girl; she was apprenticed to Madame Levy about five years ago, soon after Madame was married. She was pretty, and Madame hated her, and was very cruel to her. Everybody else was sorry for her, because she had no friends in England; some relation had left her with Madame. At last she went away, and Madame said her friends had fetched her. But,' went on Nelly in a frightened whisper, 'I saw her, you know, and other people have seen her too; yes, indeed, Martha. I'll tell you of somebody who has. So they say in the town that Dina Vandoren is dead; that she died here, and was perhaps killed—starved or something. Now I will never, never say one word more about it to anybody.'

"'But tell me who else has seen her.'

"'Well, just that, then. Edward Cohen, who used to work for Mr. Levy. They turned him away for saying so. He's working now for Mr. Diplock in Keeley Street, along with my cousin. He told my cousin and lots of people.' Nelly ran off, and kept her word; not one word more would she say.

"A month went by, and I saw nothing further. But though Nelly was dumb, yet I got, through

her, to know the Edward Cohen who had worked for Mr. Levy, and we became great friends, so that he told me all about it. He had known Dina Vandoren through coming to the house to work. She was very young, he said, and pretty and timid; she had been left there by a man who said he was her uncle. He had gone away directly, being a sailor, and had not been seen since. Soon after he was gone, Madame Levy began to ill-treat Dina, worse than she had ever treated one of her apprentices before. She beat her, and starved her, and made her sleep on the damp mattress in the storeroom, and sometimes kept her shut up for days in the horrid dark place. At last when the neighbours were beginning to talk, Madame Levy suddenly told everybody that Dina Vandoren had been fetched away by some of her relations from Brussels; anyhow she was gone, though nobody had seen her go, or set eyes upon the persons who fetched her. Edward Cohen believed Madame's story with the rest, till one day he saw Dina, as he thought, looking out of the storeroom window. Then he imagined that Madame was keeping her shut up there, and he told the neighbours; and Mr. Levy and Madame heard of it, and were so angry that they discharged him on the spot. Since then he had pretty much held his tongue; before he left, too, he made sure that poor Dina was not shut up in the storeroom, and thought that if it was her ghost he had seen, it was not much use making a fuss.

"I told Edward Cohen what I had seen, and he informed me that a servant had been sent away before for seeing Dina Vandoren; another servant had seen nothing, or if she had, had not told.

"You will wonder perhaps why I stopped with the Levys after what I had seen and heard. But they were not bad sort of people so far as I could see; it was an easy place, with plenty of young people about, and I was young too, and merry, as I have said. Besides, if I had left them and got another place, it might have been out of Portsmouth, and I wanted to stop in Portsmouth. I had my reasons. As for the ghost, I soon got used to the idea of it, not being at all a fearful person; and though I did see it again, it wasn't perhaps more than twice in the next six months, and always at the storeroom window. That made me feel safe perhaps; for the storeroom was kept locked, and I felt as if the ghost was shut up there.

"But at last something else happened, and I did get a real fright. I slept in an attic at the top of the house; it had no window; only a sky-light. It was June, and quite light at nine o'clock, when one evening I went up to my room to fetch something. I opened the door, and there just under the skylight stood a girl in a black frock, with her back to me.

"'Nelly!' I said, though somehow I knew it was not Nelly.

"Then the girl turned her head and looked at me, and I saw it was Dina Vandoren. At least it was the same face I had seen in the storeroom; always so pale and piteous looking. My tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth, and for a minute I could not move; how I got down to the kitchen I don't know; the next thing I remember I was crying in a chair beside the window.

"Well, I felt I could not bear this. So, when I had collected myself a bit, I just went and found

Madame Levy, and told her I must leave that day month.

"Oh! and what is the reason?" she said.

"I thought all at once I would tell her, and see how she looked. 'So I said—

"I have seen the ghost up in my bedroom, ma'am. So long as it kept to the storeroom I did not much mind, but now I shall never feel safe."

"Madame Levy could not turn pale, she was too yellow; but she looked at me, and then showed all her teeth.

"You are a fool!" she said. "Go, then!" I remembered afterwards that she was not astonished, and did not ask me any questions, as a person who did not know what I meant would naturally have done.

I went down stairs again, and was coming round a little, and arranging in my mind how I would make up a bed in the back kitchen on the sly, when there came a ring at the bell. That was nothing extraordinary, for all the Jews in Portsmouth came by turns to see the Levys when their shops were shut. But when I opened the door, it was not a Jew, but a short broad-shouldered sailor.

"Madame Levy?" he said. "I am Max Vandoren, and I want to see Madame Levy and my niece." I went up stairs quite stupid, and the sailor followed me. I heard Madame give a little shriek when she saw him. I didn't listen at doors, so I don't know what they said, but I heard Madame's shrill voice, and the sailor's growl all the way down in the kitchen. Presently he came thundering down stairs and out at the door, roaring to himself, in French I suppose. Mr. Levy was out. In five minutes Madame rang for me, and when I went up I found her and Madame Rose talking excitedly together in their own language.

"When that man comes again, Martha, I will not see him! I will not see him, do you hear? He wants his niece! I have not got his niece. I tell him his niece go away with a man and a woman two, three year ago!" Madame spoke good English till she got excited, when she made mistakes and mingled foreign words in her talk.

But Madame was forced to see M. Max Vandoren, for he came next day with a policeman, and finally Madame was taken before a magistrate, though on what charge I don't know. To the magistrate she swore that Dina Vandoren had been taken out of her charge three years ago, by a man and woman, Belgians, who said they were her brother and sister-in-law. She said they came to the house one night when she and Dina were alone, and finding Dina looking ill and unhappy, they had abused her, Madame, and carried off the girl, whom she had willingly let go, having found her stupid and useless. She said the girl had gone off delighted.

To this Max Vandoren replied that his niece had no brother, and no relations but himself. That he had told Madame Levy so when he left Dina, and had begged her to be kind to the child during his absence, which he did not intend to be so long. He had met with shipwreck and mischances. Madame Levy and he were both furious and obstinate; Madame stuck to her story, and Vandoren refused to believe it; declared that his niece had been made away with, and threatened to bring all Portsmouth about the Levys' ears. He

said so much that he was bound over to keep the peace and threatened with an action for libel. After that he was quieter; but his talk and the whole affair ruined the Levys. Mr. Levy had never done much, and now no ladies would come into Madame's shop. In a fortnight her trade fell off completely, and then one fine evening Madame Rose and Mr. Levy went off with some boxes. They said they were coming back, and Madame Levy stayed behind. But the Sunday morning before my month was up I woke, and thinking the house very quiet, came down to find it empty and pretty nearly stripped. The apprentices always went home from Saturday to Monday, and Madame Levy had cleared out all but the heaviest things in the night. How I don't know; I suppose her Jew friends helped her. She owed her rent, and a great deal besides.

When the landlord came to take possession we found Dina Vandoren's box and things among those left behind, and Max Vandoren was more certain than ever, for he said that if Dina had gone of her own accord she would have taken the things with her, especially the book. I thought, on the contrary, that if the Levys had really been guilty, they would have taken pains to hide them.

No. Dina was never found—not that I heard of, at least. And who was it that I, and Nelly, and Edward Cohen, saw? It was either Dina Vandoren or her ghost. I have often thought it odd that the one time I saw her completely was on the very evening her uncle came to ask for her.

Yes, the house is standing still; but when I went to Portsmouth ten years ago it had been turned into a low public-house, and I shouldn't have known it again. It stood empty for years after the Levys left, for the story of the ghost was all over Portsmouth; and though of course everybody said they didn't believe it, yet they wouldn't take the house. So it came down some steps in the world."



CHRISTMAS IN THE WEST COUNTRY.

WE have all of us heard what Christmas has been like in days gone by, and we know, too, most of us tolerably well, what Christmas is like in many places to-day. The picture is very familiar of Christmas in the olden time, when the fire went roaring up the huge chimney, and the red blaze was reflected back from helm and breast-plate hanging round the baronial hall, and the red wine sparkled in the Wassail cup, and the harp rang beneath the minstrel's swift fingers, as the merry dance quickened the pulses alike of page and knight, noble lady and bower-woman; a rejoicing together in one bright, holiday festival. We have read pretty descriptions by the score of Christmases among ourselves in some orphanage or hospital, where the weak and suffering, or the children that have known no ray of home love, are made glad by a brief glow of warm sunshine coming from liberal hands and tender hearts. We are well aware, also, what Christmas is like in southern lands, where the Madonna's shrine is surrounded by the gleam of flashing tapers, and the crowds stream into the gorgeous churches to gaze upon the mimic scene, which shows forth,

now the wondering shepherds listening to the angels' song, and now the manger cradle with the ox and the ass feeding near at hand.

In all these varied forms Christmas is, in truth, an oft-repeated, threadbare theme among us; we can almost go through each particular about it by heart, we know them so well. There is, however, a part of England where Christmas still holds his state in a manner that is, in many respects, new and fresh to the dwellers in cities, who are going to their Christmas balls, and watching the gambols of fairies in Christmas pantomimes, and buying their holly by the bunch at no small price, and gazing in at decorated shop windows to admire Norfolk turkeys and fat geese. To this region we will now carry our readers without the help of either balloon or express train.

There is no lack of holly-berries here, no need to spend either silver or copper if we wish to deck our houses ever so lavishly in honour of the season. There are other rare Christmas decorations, too, close at hand, such as the longest purse in streets and squares cannot command. Delicate ivy traceries such as skilful hands might weave into perfect dreams of graceful, decorative fancy; variegated holly leaves that shimmer in the most different shades of green; soft velvet mosses which would make a fit cushion for a wood-nymph on a summer's day; all these are to be found, if we will only take the trouble to go to look for them, in some deep lane, where the high hedges make the east wind a far rarer guest than he is even on the shores of the Mediterranean. True, we have to tread a pavement that is more curious and original than comfortable, being composed of a mosaic of liquid red mud and rough, rolling stones and slippery rocks, but this we shall deem a trifles as we gather our rich Christmas harvest. The holly-berries draw us on with twinkling smiles, and we feel we cannot choose but follow their winsome leading, though there may be a few small obstacles in our path in the way of a glare of rock, or a not too narrow brook, which here has chosen to take a capricious little turn out of the water meadows hard by.

At a Christmas west country dinner there is always one rare dainty, or rather combination of dainties, such as would certainly have been invented by an Exmoor brain, and such as could only be digested by an Exmoor stomach. The plum-pudding appears on the west country Christmas table according to good old English wont and use, and if it is an extra orthodox plum-pudding, it may perhaps be decked with a sprig of holly and wrapped in blue flames; we rejoice at its entry as in Christmas duty bound, and set ourselves manfully to work upon the task of consuming our own especial share. We have swallowed about two or three mouthfuls, when, suddenly, a voice in our ear bids us turn round and help ourselves to we cannot imagine what, for surely, in all truth and reason, we are quite sufficiently helped already to satisfy the most rigid observer of Christmas usages. What is our overwhelming astonishment and dismay when we behold an immense bowl of thick, clotted, Devonshire cream presented to us as the natural and indeed necessary, accompaniment of plum-pudding.

We pause, and hesitate still, for the thing appears to us utterly preposterous and impos-

sible. We glance round the table to see what the rest of the party are doing in the emergency, then we see the portentous sight of a little mountain of cream flanking the slice of plum-pudding on every plate. If we continue to linger before doing what is evidently regarded as a sacred Christmas duty, each eye is turned reproachfully upon us, and a dozen voices cry out at once.

"Why, you have forgotten the trimmings."

"The trimmings" is the universal west country phrase for cream when eaten with plum-pudding.

On Christmas morning any one who visits a west country farmyard will observe an unwonted degree of busy activity among those whose duty it is to feed the animals, "to serve the stock" as they themselves would express it in west country idiom. Vast stores of hay are brought from the neighbouring rick, the corn-bin is heaped up higher than it has been throughout the year, the turnip-cutting machine did double work on Christmas Eve, so that there is a whole mound of provisions ready for the sheep, who, in default of grass, live on turnips in winter time. What does all this mean? Has the farmer forgotten that this is a holiday, and is he going to increase the work of all his labourers and farm lads by bringing home to-day some great addition of stock?

No, the west country farmer is very far from forgetting Christmas and its due honour; far from that, he is going to celebrate it in a way in which it will be celebrated by few others in the land except his immediate neighbours. Every animal on the farm to-day, horse, bullock, and sheep, will have placed before him exactly double his usual portion of food, whatever it may be. No matter how poor the farmer may be, or how many animals may crowd the stable and cow-shed, or how scanty may have been last summer's crops, this Christmas ceremony must not be neglected. If it was omitted, no one can answer for the consequences which might ensue. There are stories told of dire and terrible misfortunes falling on the farmer whose covetousness has caused him to give up the good old Christmas custom—and who would dare to brave such a fate?

It is well known throughout the west country, and believed in as a fact as certain as that of the world's going round, that during the night preceding Christmas day all the animals are allowed the faculty of speech; they converse together with human voices, and are also endowed with foresight concerning what is going to happen in the coming year, and discuss the knowledge thus gained very freely. Nothing, however, is more sure to bring misfortune to any man or woman than trying to hear the conversations of their fourfooted neighbours. Many instances are given in confirmation of this fact.

One of the most gruesome of these legends, and yet most horribly realistic at the same time, tells how there was once upon a time a hill country farmer of a very evil character, who never went to church, who ill-treated his wife and children, who was covetous and mean in all his dealings, who was hard and harsh to the poor, and cruel to all the animals on his farm. He had an utter disbelief in the power of speech given to his horses and cattle on Christmas Eve night, added to all his

other shortcomings, and though besought by his wife not to do it, he insisted, in a spirit of light mockery, on concealing himself somewhere in the stable one Christmas Eve after sunset, in order that he might prove how false and foolish the popular notion on the subject was.

The minutes went by, the church clock told that it was midnight, the sceptical farmer was just going off to bed with a careless laugh, for hitherto the stable had been as silent as a church-yard. All at once, however, he heard his own black horse, that he generally rode, heave a deep sigh and say in a distinct voice to his neighbour, the horse that went usually in the farmer's wife's trap, in the next stall,—

"Oh, Black Diamond, how I do wish our master was not such a bad, cruel man. I am not really an ill-tempered horse, but he whips me and spurs me until I lose all patience."

"Never mind, Charlie," replied Black Diamond, in language quite as clear and audible, "our turn is soon coming. Next June our master will have to sell us because he will be in debt, and next July we shall draw the hearse at his funeral."

Of course the story winds up with Black Diamond's prophecy coming strictly true.

In the west country there are still many who call Twelfth Day "Old Christmas Day," and by west country folk it is universally kept as a holiday, when no work is done. On what they call Old Christmas Eve, the west country people say that the following remarkable circumstance takes place precisely as the clock strikes midnight: the master bullock of the herd lows softly three times, and goes down on his knees before the manger. This superstition has in it, in truth, a touch of beautiful, poetic fancy, so we cannot do better than finish with it our record of Christmas in the West Country.

Alice King.

FAINT HEART, FAITHFUL."

A STORY OF A CATHEDRAL TOWN.

BY EDWIN WHELPTON.

Author of "Meadowsweet," "A Lincolnshire Heroine," &c.

CHAPTER XX.

STARTLING NEWS.

LITTLE birds seem to whisper more when trouble is about than when joy is predominant. They take a pleasure then in tattling. It reached Lady Mary and Edith Heron through Davison, of all people, that the Devenses were in some trouble, and it was thought that Master Richard was the cause of it.

"Failed again!" echoed Lady Mary, closing her lips ominously for Dick if he ventured within her doors. But Lady Mary would not ask for more information. That would come, the true or the more reliable, when Cicely Devensey got back home. She contented herself with a short homily on slander, which Davison listened to with perfect gravity, assenting to every word.

But the next morning Davison had heard more news, and Edith Heron meeting Aylmer, the gentleman confirmed what Davison had said that morning, that Dick Devensey had failed.

"Moreover," said Aylmer, "he has taken the plunge. He has gone upon the stage."

"You do surprise me," said Edith, inclined to return home and acquaint Lady Mary.

"I am not so much surprised," said Aylmer quietly. "I hear Dr. Devensey and family are in quite a way about it. I do not see why they should be. He has failed again; he would fail every time, because his heart is not in it. I have had a letter from Dick this morning and a newspaper. He was fortunate in his *début*. It appears he became acquainted with some gentleman who is a devoted lover of the theatre; he gave Dick an invitation to meet a select party at his house, there, Dick gave a recitation, and as his friend had ventilated Dick's aspiration to an hysterical couple, they offered him the *entrée* into their own company. He need not look back any more; he has talent, a good appearance, a pleasant voice, and is far from being a dull fellow."

"I hope," said Edith, "he will be successful. I see no reason why he should be condemned."

"Nor I; the question with him now is a livelihood. He must look out for himself or be a burthen upon others. Dick has written home, I know; he says that they will consider his letter a reckless one, for in it he tells them he will cure hypochondriacs by making them laugh, and that he is looking forward to accepting fifty guineas a night for his fee."

"How ridiculous! how foolish of him! Poor Dick! it is just like him," said Edith.

"At present, he writes, he is at the foot of the ladder, a subordinate. The vocation he has chosen he believes he shall succeed in; he cannot expect fifty guineas at once, but he has bread and cheese, and he is determined to work hard."

"He will redeem his character then," laughed Edith.

"I intend replying to-night. I shall tell him that if he had been possessed with the same laudable determination, he would not have been plucked so often."

"I have half a mind to run back and tell aunty," said Edith. "She will think Dick is ostracised now, that no one will think of cultivating his acquaintance. She does not think it so very respectable being an amateur," laughed Edith.

"I am not surprised at your reluctance, then," said Aylmer.

"After it was all over, I felt almost as if I had lived somebody else's life. The morning following I could scarcely believe it had all happened; it seemed almost like a dream. I almost felt ashamed of it all; I really never shall appear again."

"I think there will be no more performances; the head and the heart have gone."

"I think I will not return home; if I tell aunty all this news, it will give her the fidgets; she will worry all day. Besides, I must get to the Deanery; so I must wish you good morning, and thank you for supplementing what we have already heard."

When the duties of the day were over, Edith found a newspaper awaiting her that had come with a short note from Aylmer, directing her attention to a marked passage; Edith saw that

a line of commendation was given to an actor who had done full justice to a subordinate part. Dick, then, had assumed a *nom de théâtre*; well, that was considerate of him. But Lady Mary was almost inconsolable.

"He has been decently bred. Poor old Devensey!" murmured she. "It will nearly kill him. They have done badly not to keep it secret. We have all got to know. I wonder what this Mr. Aylmer thinks of it. See what that last affair has led to!"

"I do not think Mr. Aylmer thinks worse of him," said Edith.

"Oh, dear, no!" returned the old lady grimly; "I forgot, it would be pot calling kettle—"

"Oh, aunty, you must not abuse Mr. Aylmer!"

"My dear, you will never hear a word spoken against that man. I do not forget what we owe to him. I am not finding fault with him or trying to pick a hole in his coat. We shall never get out of his debt I suppose," said Lady Mary with sarcastic mournfulness. "Dick Devensey I used to like, faulty as he was. I was always pleased to have the boy here. What a rascal to act as he has done!" cried she vehemently; "he ought to have thought of his family."

"He has done, aunty; he is not acting under his own name."

"Then, is that honest? He is a living falsity."

"The Dean says Richard Devensey has not done anything disgraceful."

"What does he know about it? But I forgot, the Dean had a brother, he went and did the same thing; but he died, and it was kept secret. He was in the army; was a wild fellow and ran through his fortune, sold out, and then married, as if he had not done sufficient mischief. He left a daughter behind him; she married a clergyman—"

"Oh, I have seen her portrait," said Edith interestedly; "did her father make any headway in his profession?"

"Profession! Really, Edith, had you said vocation— I don't know. The Dean educated the child, and his first wife was very kind to her. But they never come now to this second wife. Edward Pomfret thinks much of them, the Dean tells me, and I think it very good of him."

"She will be his nearest cousin."

"I am glad for one thing Dick Devensey does not think of returning yet awhile," said Lady Mary.

"Why, aunty?" asked Edith.

"Why? Because when he does come it will have ceased to be a sensation, and very possibly when he comes back he will have seen the error of his ways."

"Oh, aunty, how cruel you are," said Edith pitifully. "I shall be glad to hear of Dick becoming a celebrity."

"Humph!" snorted Lady Mary. "I have no opinion of such celebrities."

About a week or so later Dr. Devensey called at Lady Mary's. No news of Mr. Pulsford had reached either Lady Mary or Edith Heron. Neither inquired of any one likely to know Pulsford's movements. When Edith Heron saw the old doctor standing upon the mat, her mind instantly began to take in that the old doctor had something to say which would go far to clear up the mystery. Never a fluent speaker, Dr. Devensey was extra-

ordinarily unintelligible this morning. He hummed and hawed and stammered and rocked on his toes, and scarcely would allow his eyes to meet hers. The pantomime, in Edith's mind, having preliminary reference to her health, Lady Mary Footitt's health, and the weather. Lady Mary herself was within earshot, and when she came into the hall, something of the same performance had to be gone through for her benefit, with the addition of a certain peculiar expression of anxiety and perturbation. He looked towards Edith somewhat mysteriously, then turned his back upon her. Edith was alarmed for a moment or two, and so was Lady Mary; the old man's sanity seemed in question. Edith began to think her aunt had sent for Dr. Devensey, wishing to consult him in private. She thought she would simplify matters if she left the stammering old man and her detected aunt together.

"Ha—hem!" murmured Dr. Devensey nervously, "yes, ah yes, Lady Mary, I wanted to confer with you, yes—privately."

Then the drawing-room door closed. It would be idle to declare that Edith Heron was not curious. She was wondering if Lady Mary had some secret complaint she was wishful to keep from her knowledge. Still, Dr. Devensey's words were not the stereotyped phrases he made use of when attending a patient.

Edith seated herself in some suspense. Unconsciously she allowed herself to drift into the line of thought wherein she moved the central figure. She had a vague feeling that she was concerned in the conversation that was being carried on below. Dr. Devensey was staying such a time. At last she heard the drawing-room door open.

"I must tell her at once, Dr. Devensey," spoke Lady Mary in a cold and grieved tone; "better to tell her, I am sure; I hate deceit."

The old doctor's toothless gums stammered some unintelligible reply. He was evidently afraid of Lady Mary.

"I cannot help it," Edith believed him to say. She could picture the obsequious old man, hat in hand, striving to appease the irate old lady, his language voluble if not easily followed.

"You cannot tell Lady Mary how—ah, astonished—grieved, yes—humiliated, confounded I was, and my head turned cold and my heart too—when I thought of you—of you, Lady Mary, and your niece, Miss Heron."

The old doctor was a little roused at the word "deceit."

"Doctor Devensey, we shall get over it, never fear. She will—or she is not the girl I take her to be. I never was wholly satisfied. One couldn't look for high breeding, but I did not expect baseness. He was a very common person."

The old doctor was very cross now, and said something in a nettled tone.

"Worth?" interrupted Lady Mary contemptuously, "don't mix her name up with theirs so much—every one will think as I think—a base girl, doctor, although she is your own—still better to be free, thank Providence."

Edith had beforetime heard her aunt give way to this caustic manner of treating people, the old lady would contrive at one and the same time to incense and humiliate the unlucky being who had incurred her displeasure. Lady Mary never got into this vein unless she was highly provoked.

Edith heard the old doctor hurriedly making his escape with many apologetic, disjointed words, but still with the voice of a man, believing himself grossly trodden underfoot. Then her aunt's voice, with a quaver in it, called to her.

"Edith! are you there, Edith?"

Edith hurried down.

"I could not help it, my dear," began the old lady, by strength of will controlling her voice. She could scarcely speak she was so full of suppressed temper. "I was rude to old Devensey, and he could not help the mischief that is done, though one scarcely knows what to think of people. One finds one false here and another false there. Whom can one trust? Oh, my poor girl, my poor, poor girl!"

"What is wrong, aunty? Is it Dick Devensey?"

"Dick Devensey—no. Dick is the flower of the flock. But can you bear it, my dear—you are not exciting yourself with—"

"Aunty," cried Edith, a little warmly, "I can bear anything you may have to tell me."

"Well, my darling, Mr. Pulsford will not return to Tremminster, that is certain. His place will be filled up."

"Why, aunty, what has he done?" cried Edith a little frightened now.

"Edith, I know you will not bear up under what you must hear!"

"He has not done anything dishonourable?"

"He has. Is it not dishonourable going away as he has done, without calling to give a word of explanation—?"

"Is that all?" cried Edith relieved.

"Child, wait until I can tell you."

"I thought something dreadful had happened to the Devensesys."

"And so there has. Where is Cicely gone? How has Mr. Pulsford treated you of late? How has she been carrying on? Pretty doings, doings under one's very eyes! Oh, the base girl! and you Edith to be so simple and unsuspecting as to be taken in by that specious, designing girl."

"Aunt, I do not know what to make of it all," cried Edith as if groping in the dark. "What has Cicely to do with Mr. Pulsford's disappearance? Cicely went to visit her mother's friends, there is nothing strange in that. What is the meaning of it all? Have you told me all or are you concealing something? Pray tell me all. What has Cicely to do with Mr. Pulsford?"

"All a tale to blind us, going among her friends—an artful tale. Cicely is Mrs. Pulsford now. She laid her plan, he went that night to meet Cicely Devensey—"

"Cicely!" cried Edith as if she could scarcely credit her ears.

"Yes, Cicely, your bosom friend—has she not played you false? But she shall never enter my house again."

"Oh aunty, do not say so."

"Why, could you meet her, Edith? It surprises me that you take things so quietly."

"I am relieved," replied Edith with a deep breath, and adding energetically, "yes, relieved, aunty. Did I not say to you I was doubtful of myself, that I had great fear of the future?"

"But it had gone so far," said Lady Mary regretfully.

"Yes," returned Edith sorrowfully, "too far perhaps, but I blame myself more than any one.

I am glad it is over, I feel better now I can say I am free. Oh, why did he not come to me, I would have released him, then he need not have had to go away and throw up his engagements here."

"Cicely's money tempted him, my dear. Oh, if my poor brother Marmaduke were alive—"

"I am afraid you will excite yourself, aunty; I think it is all best as it is. I can think I have had a loophole of escape, and have got through safe. Perhaps Cicely's money was a great temptation, as you say. Very possibly he will be much happier with her than he would have been with me. Cicely wanted him, and she has him, and I—"

"And I—what?" interposed Lady Mary.

"I hope they will be happy. If I had married him there would have come most surely my retribution."

"Edith!" exclaimed Lady Mary, feeling how noble was this young girl before her, "I wonder—I wonder—"

"What, aunty?"

"I wonder where Doctor Aylmer is? He has gone out old Devensey says. "Oh, I forgot, Desforges will know where Mr. Aylmer has gone, but he wouldn't tell Devensey. I don't wonder at Desforges keeping such matters private from such an old parrot. But that poor girl told Desforges how good Aylmer had been to her. I really do think there is something—something good about that young man."

"Poor Bella!"

"That old Devensey seemed to me already half reconciled in spite of his asseverations," muttered Lady Mary with increased bitterness. "As Davison says, if any one deceives an old woman like me, they have only another to beguile."

"Oh! aunty, we will not quarrel with the Devensesys," said Edith, with a smile; "they could not help it. What could they do when the news reached them? They could not undo it all."

"Devensey seemed more afraid of the Dean than of any one else. What annoys me most, they think Cicely might have done better. There is no bottom to some people's vanity. I should have thought what was good enough for you was too good for such a jade. But that is the only satisfaction I have; I should not have liked for them to have settled down wholly contented. But, Edith, what shall you say to Mrs. Pomfret?"

"Oh! I do not know, aunty. I shall have some inspiration. There, aunty, I must go now. What a beautiful morning it is for the time of the year—misty, and warm and still. I do love to hear the bells on such a morning as this."

Lady Mary regarded her niece with a grave, silent pride, the young face full of tender trust and pitiful solicitude for her. What a brave good girl not to be beaten down. It was mortifying, even if she had not cared for this base fellow. No woman could be the victim of falsehood, duplicity, treachery, and stand unmoved.

"She said it was a relief," said Lady Mary, thoughtfully, to herself after Edith had gone, "and I was in such a temper about it."

CHAPTER XXI.

R.S.V.P.

DOCTOR and Mrs. Desforges were noted for their social reunions. They had the pleasantest gatherings in Tremenister, because the Doctor had an aversion to a crowd.

A card of Mrs. Desforges lay on Lady Mary Footitt's table, and Edith and Lady Mary were discussing the question of accepting or not. R.S.V.P., it must be replied to.

"I think we ought to go, Daisy; you have been caged so long a time, but you must have a new dress."

"Can we afford it, aunty?" inquired Edith, with a laugh.

"We will afford it," declared Lady Mary recklessly. "As I had to go into the town I thought I might as well pay the accounts as take Davison off her work, and as I was passing through Burghersh Street I heard some one tapping at Dr. Desforges' window. Tapping at a window, so-so; common people tap at windows. At first I did not think of turning my head, for a baker's lad was in the street. How did I know but that it was a servant tapping for him. When—I don't know what caused me to turn my head, but there was Mrs. Desforges standing outside her door. 'Lady Mary! Lady Mary!'—you know her weak, thin voice, she can scarcely make herself heard in her own room—'are you not going to call?' 'Well, you know I was not,' said I. 'I am sure I was not, Mrs. Desforges,' and she laughed. 'Do,' said she, 'come across; I want you.' Then, when I got in of course I sat down, and stayed longer than I intended to do, which is generally the case with me. Idlers idle away their time more than they intend. 'Did you get my card?' asked Mrs. Desforges; 'of course you have.' 'Yes,' I owned, 'I had got it; but we must be excused again.' But no, she would take no refusal this time. We should meet people we should like. I asked her—bluntly I know—how she knew that, and I went further, asked her who we really should meet."

"Oh, aunty!" exclaimed Edith, "you were brusque."

"She laughed, but would not say. I wouldn't go to meet any of the Devenseys, not if I were dying to meet somebody."

"Really, aunty, you should not say so."

"It is best to be honest. I did not say what I thought though. *They* don't like 'em, I know. I don't hate them, my dear, but that is not to say I love them. I shall keep them at arm's length—"

"Excepting poor Dick!" pleaded Edith.

"I don't know so much about him," said Lady Mary resentfully. "In my opinion those people have sunk again to nobodies. If one is poor, one is not obliged to be intimate. One of them runs away to become a mouthing play-actor, and another plays her friend false, and worse. Oh, no, I will have none of them!"

"I am afraid," said Edith ruefully, "that Mrs. Desforges will think we are people who have malice and hatred in our hearts."

"There you are wrong. She could just look at it all in the same light as I do myself. She said, 'Lady Mary, my husband and I had decided from

the first we must not have them. You know,' whispered she, 'of course Philip and Devensey must get on together with as little heartburning as possible, but we decided that they must be absent. They must come to our next merry meeting."

"Did you tell her, then, we should go, aunt? If you did, a reply is scarcely necessary."

"No, I did not tell her we would. I said I must see what my mistress said."

"That is unfair, aunty, to place all the responsibility upon me."

"My dear, how was I certain that you would go. I did not want to promise for you, it is such a little time since—since all that happened. Still I must give you credit for having borne up so well. Even if your affections were not so deeply involved, there was some mortification—"

"None, aunty. How often must I assert that?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Lady Mary incredulously, "you will continue saying so, I know. Desforges came in and said we should find all friends, not one who would be so stupid as to whisper a word or show by a grimace that they were aware you had been badly used."

"I suppose I shall have to endure much condolence, if it does not find expression; it is there in people's minds. How ridiculous it is, aunty, taking it for granted the poor bird has been upset from its perch and its wing broken. I suppose this is something like a challenge. Well, aunty, we will go."

CHAPTER XXII.

BASE DESFORGES.

It was a vision *spirituelle*, so some one thought as Edith Heron, with old Lady Mary Footitt, entered Mrs. Desforges' drawing-room. It would be almost an impossible feat to determine what she owed to her dress, for it was simplicity itself, and yet any one would have said there was exquisite taste from the bit of blue ribbon in her hair to the dainty rosettes on her shoes.

Mrs. Desforges took Lady Mary's hand, complimenting Lady Mary on her looks and appearance, but the doctor's wife's eyes rested on Edith with more genuine admiration.

"How glad I am you have come, Lady Mary, and so glad I am to see you looking so well. Indeed, you put some of us to the blush; but you have such a good servant," whispered Mrs. Desforges.

"I never have any one to assist me to dress," said Lady Mary loudly, disregarding every one and somewhat disconcerting Mrs. Desforges. "I used to have a maid, but—"

Mrs. Desforges turned hurriedly to Edith Heron.

"And how are you, Edith? Do you know," said she in a little lower key, "how nice you look? I am sure, my dear girl, you brighten my room. Why cannot we have you oftener?"

"I do like coming here," returned Edith candidly, "but one is so soon spoiled, and, Mrs. Desforges, I like coming to see yourself and the

doctor when you have no other people here. Am I rude?"

"Not at all, dear. Well, the winter is coming on now apace; we will have you here often. But I have no doubt there are some people here you will know. Dr. Olde is in the hall, I hear. Philip, just see to Lady Mary and Edith."

Delivering her friends to her adjutant, Mrs. Desforges prepared herself to receive the venerable organist, who had returned from his long leave of absence. Edith had a moment when she could criticize her host. The jolly doctor looked tidy and uncrumpled, but Edith could not help thinking he looked better in the smoking-cap and loose costume he affected *en famille*.

At a small table in a corner of the room some one was already occupied with a portfolio of sketches. Edith caught a view of a man's broad back which seemed familiar to her, the light hair and the carriage of the shoulders. But the doctor, after finding Lady Mary a comfortable lounge, carried Edith Heron off to admire a choice winter plant, as he deemed it, which he had obtained of an old woman in the country—one of his patients.

"Now, is it not a beauty?" asked the doctor; "at least, it will be."

Edith looked very dubiously at it, and the doctor felt he must extol it still more if he wished to excite Edith's enthusiasm; but Mrs. Desforges, having turned over Dr. Olde to Lady Mary, came between them.

"Can you see anything in it?" inquired Mrs. Desforges, addressing Edith. "Well, I must tell you its history; we brought it home to-day, Philip and I. A poor old woman in the country sold it to him for five shillings."

"Oh, doctor," said Edith impulsively, "I can appreciate the whole business. It is a good action blossoming in the dust."

"Aylmer," cried the doctor aloud, "come here. Now, do you think that a bad five shilling's worth?"

Edith Heron started. Yes, indeed, it was Aylmer returned. They interchanged recognitions, and Aylmer came and stood by her side.

"Not if you are satisfied with your bargain, doctor," said Aylmer.

"Mrs. Desforges seems to think I have taken myself in."

"I wish, Philip, you would look after Tompson," whispered the doctor's wife. "See if he is in the dining-room. And there are the Osgodbies, just arrived. Mr. Aylmer, would you mind showing Miss Heron poor Ferdy's sketches, views in New Zealand and Australia. Philip has had them brought down specially for you to look at, dear. Mr. Aylmer chanced to speak of a letter he had received from that far distant colony from an old companion—"

"Who has turned from medicine to sheep-farming," interpolated Aylmer.

"So Philip mentioned these sketches to Mr. Aylmer," continued Mrs. Desforges.

"They are very beautiful," said Aylmer; "the doctor's brother was a true artist, so far as I am a judge."

"You make me anxious to see them," said Edith.

She sat down at the little table where Aylmer was seated when she first entered the room, he

had gone over them leisurely before, and was well prepared to render her comprehension of each feature and locality more complete.

"I have been out," said Aylmer, in low tones; "did you know?"

"Yes, you have been away some time, I think. Two or three people made me acquainted with the fact," she said, with a conscious blush that well became her. "You have been away two months."

"I only returned this morning. I met with Desforges at the railway station. He insisted upon my finishing a broken day here."

"You have had a pretty long holiday."

"Yes, I was detained away much longer than I anticipated. But it has scarcely been a holiday. In fact, I have been to Norway. It has been a most painful affair. Sir Aubrey—you have heard your aunt speak of him—well, his heir went fishing there in company with two other—lads I may call them, and young Aubrey was drowned. Sir Aubrey wished to send some one. He wrote to me; I could not refuse him."

"No, you could not; but how shocking."

"Yes. Sir Aubrey was in a terrible way. While I was away another person died, an old friend of my parents, a real friend. Therefore, when I got back to England, I had to hurry from Sir Aubrey's on business connected with the affairs of my parents' friend."

"I am afraid you have had a distressful time."

"Yes; but I scarcely knew anything of Sir Aubrey's sons, and very little it was that I knew of this old friend of my parents. My business though has been of a depressing nature."

"Sir Aubrey Aylmer, had he other sons?"

"One other only."

Edith coloured. It suddenly occurred to her that he might think she was calculating on his chance of succession.

"I asked because my aunt knew Sir Aubrey so well when she was young. I don't think she knows of this sad business."

"Oh, it has been in the papers."

"I take the *Standard*, a day old, from the Deanery, for aunty—Mrs. Pomfret lends me it—and we have the *Tremminster Chronicle*. We should, perhaps, miss the paragraph if there was one."

Then she changed the conversation. "I should not care for Australia," she remarked, "although there are some wild and romantic views."

"It is very well for a man who can rough it," said Aylmer, with a smile, comprehending her.

"Yes, I think a woman tenderly nurtured should remain in comfortable England."

"But those who have husbands going must go. If even I had a brother determined to emigrate, and we two were alone in the world, I think I must go to."

"My friend there has married an Australian girl. You would be surprised how differently people live there—I mean socially. He rode two hundred miles up the country with her; that was their first introduction. Her father was a squatter, whose sheep-run lay contiguous to the one my friend had purchased. I will show you his photograph some day, and one I have of his wife. He was a delicate-looking fellow when we were walking the hospitals together, but he hated the profession as much as ever poor Dick Devensley did. There was nothing left for him, he said, but emi-

gration. Like myself, he had few ties; so he realized a little property he had, and set sail for this El Dorado."

"His free untrammeled life tempts you," said Edith, with a twinkling light in her eyes.

"Why should you think so, Miss Heron?"

"You are so enthusiastic."

"Well, I will confess I was greatly taken with his letter to me. We do live most prosaically in England; I mean everything seems to go by hard set rule. We are tied and bound by the chains of social tyranny. I have just been out and been stirred a little, else sometimes at home I feel as if I were fast becoming fossilized. We have only reliefs now and again, as, for instance, when we hear of such acts of goodness as Desforges buying rubbish for the sake of bestowing a few shillings where they were needed."

"But Dr. Desforges evidently believes it worth the money."

"Oh, bah, Miss Heron, if you believe so your innocence is refreshing," said Aylmer, bluntly. "It is all hypocrisy on Desforges' part—excuse me, it is to make Mrs. Desforges too astounded to speak. He would exchange his head, if any one else fancied it in preference to their own—that is, if it were possible."

"He will keep his own good heart. But, Mr. Aylmer, you are a guilty person. Do I not know how good you were to Bella?"

"Poor girl! she died shortly after I was called away."

"Yes; she did wish she could live to see you again."

"I knew I had looked upon her for the last time. I did think of the poor girl when I was away."

"I judged you would. I wondered, although I had no right to be curious, what was keeping you away, or whether you intended returning."

"You did give me a thought, then?" said he, musing.

It was more an expression of gratitude to her than a question. But his voice was full of tender meaning and hopefulness.

She knew he was waiting for her to look up, that he was not expecting her to reply. What a terrible facility of tongue she had! She had not for a moment counted upon such a rejoinder, and inwardly she felt very much disconcerted. He began to speak himself, and his voice was low and tremulous, bringing to her mind the day when he came and sat near her under the old apple-tree in her aunt's garden.

"You cannot tell how that has stirred me; at the same time, I can see that you almost wish you had not said so much. Of course, Desforges has told me everything that has occurred during my absence—bound me over though not to whisper a word. I feel as if something had come that was to be an immense relief to me; there is always relief when something occurs to remove fear and doubt. I seemed to be living in suspense, and in a suspense most harassing. I could not exert myself when I expected even affairs would end most disastrously for me. I shall not have such another opportunity this evening of speaking to you, a thousand chances to one; I can see every one is preparing to move. But, Edith, to-morrow is Saturday—say three o'clock—may I call upon you? Or if I met you out—which will

suit you? Across the Greetwell Fields to the Monks' Abbey is a pleasant walk, if the day is not too cold. You dare venture to give me a little time, I have so much to tell you. I cannot begin here—that was Desforges speaking—you will not refuse? Take my arm; perhaps I have caused some curiosity here—I beg ten thousand pardons, Desforges—why, your aunt and Desforges are going—just incline your head, and you will make me happy for the remainder of the evening."

Lady Mary Footitt, looking over her shoulder, muttered to Desforges—

"Why, isn't that Dr. Aylmer? What a time he has been away! I did not recognise him before." Lady Mary felt a little disquieted. "He will have lost all his patients."

"Very likely," said Desforges, tickled at the grim satisfaction of his brusque companion. "Young fellows nowadays don't seem to care what they neglect so long as they follow their own pleasure."

"Old people sometimes have to be thankful they are no worse than they are," returned Lady Mary, crossly.

"Doctor," said Lady Mary some moments later, "what has Aylmer been doing lately?"

"Business, Lady Mary—business; compelled to leave his patients here to me."

"You will keep them all."

"I trust not, Lady Mary, they are all so poor; they never pay."

"Just what I have always thought," said Lady Mary hopelessly; "he will never make bread-and-cheese." Then, after a pause again—she spoke her thoughts aloud—"He has been talking to Edith this hour, and now he is sitting by her. I don't know—no, I don't know what she can see in him."

"He is the youngest man we have here tonight, Lady Mary."

"Why did you ask him, Desforges?"

"Because I like him. He is a good fellow, of a good family."

"He has never been here before—at least, not when I have."

"Because I cannot prevail upon him often. He is a recluse."

"Why did you ask him to come?"

"For the same reason that I asked you, Lady Mary—because I wanted good company."

The old lady's face was a complete study after every glance down the table, when she caught a glimpse of Aylmer apparently completely absorbing her niece. Lady Mary looked as if she felt there was some abominable treason somewhere, that her niece had been trepanned, and there she sat—forced, positively forced—to accept everything quietly. Aylmer's face was lit up as if he was possessed with a strange exhilaration. He was chuckling to think how successful was the plot.

Aylmer certainly was filled with a strange happiness, but later came the demerit of a consciousness that some one else was not regarding him with the most cordial feelings in the world. Lady Mary Footitt was within earshot. A look behind him, and he readily translated the expression in Lady Mary's face: she was not over well pleased with his attentions to her niece. It came almost like a shock to him, and Aylmer held himself a little aloof from his charmer the remainder of the night. He was happy when, later in the evening,

Edith tendered him her hand, Lady Mary having expressed her desire to go. The little hand seemed to rest in his reliably; it was not withdrawn suddenly, nor did her fingers simply touch his.

"Aylmer," cried Desforges, "you will escort these ladies home. They will tell you where they live; it is not far distant."

Desforges was helping him. Well, he dare scarcely have offered himself. Aylmer almost expected Lady Mary would decline, but she did not. She looked at Desforges ominously, muttering to her host severely—

"You have done this purposely."

"No, Lady Mary."

"You have—don't deny it. I am offended with you. Edith and I are always under the machinations of some one."

Nevertheless she availed herself of Aylmer's arm, although persistent in having Edith to support her on the other side.

"Good night, Desforges," said Aylmer, "I shall not return."

"Oh, that is nonsense, you must. I want a cigar with you. I shall not let you off, Aylmer."

Thought Lady Mary sardonically: "Desforges wants to tell him to beware of the old cat, or advise him to propitiate her."

She chattered volubly in her brusque manner all the way home, so that Edith was perforce a listener. It almost seemed to both that Lady Mary was determined they should not have an opportunity to exchange a word. But, as the old song has it, "Love will find out the way."

"It is too late to ask you in, Mr. Aylmer," said Lady Mary. There was the same intonation he recollects her to have used once before. "And Desforges wishes you to get back to him."

The old lady gave him her hand limply, as if she did not wish him to imagine she desired to be even cordial. But he forgave her; Edith's hand was scarcely so frigid and unyielding.

"I am not going to have him coming here often. Hump! Desforges admits he doesn't make bread-and-cheese," muttered Lady Mary to herself. "He marry my lily—no, no, he must not."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

AYLMER had scarcely breakfasted when there was a call for him, and he had to prepare himself for a possible operation in one of his most squalid localities. He wondered how it had so soon become known there that he had returned. But those who have once discovered a true friend or kindly counsellor are never long in ignorance of his movements.

Aylmer found his patient had been visited by Desforges, and that it was a much simpler case than he had been led to believe. After some reassuring and confident words, he took his leave, and passing out of the narrow passage which few would have dreamed an entry to any human habitations, he came into the narrow street known as Hungate, an old quarter of the town, with overhanging houses of wood and plaster on one side, the queerest church and graveyard on the other,

here and there back entrances to inns and hostries, ill-smelling and disreputable. Was it accident or design that brought him into Eastgate? He looked like a man who in his heart carries the hope of a rencontre. His face was frank and sunny, his figure animated, and his step buoyant. He was walking quickly; he reconsidered himself, and his pace became much slower. This was a quiet street, invaded by no outcries; no itinerant hawkers of vegetables found it worth their time traversing it, disreputables generally hurried through it as if conscious of their temerity approaching the sacred precincts of cathedral dignitaries. There was an air of overpowering superiority in the street. Aylmer's eyes were directed towards one great house; the portico, the door, the stone steps, the iron railing, he surveyed all in one glance. What if a vision were to appear; the thought became reality, the real self of her who was enshrined in his thoughts presented herself to his view. It was no vision, but a being full of warm life, yet unconscious of his proximity to her. Her eyes glanced in the direction he was coming, he believed; he believed she had recognised him; he must have been, for she lingered a moment, and then, although she continued on her way, she did not walk so quickly as was her habit. He hurried along to reach her, and it seemed to his hoping heart that she divined his wish to be with her, his desire to speak again to her. This he took as the happiest omen.

She did indeed linger; once she slightly turned her head to see whether he was gaining upon her. It was an involuntary movement, but she did not regret it.

It is no immodesty in a woman revealing by some slight sign her preference when her confidence has been won. There was no immodesty on her part lingering until he reached her. It would have been prudery to pretend that she had not seen and recognised him. Had she hurried along she believed Aylmer would have felt himself hardly used, or made to feel himself undignified.

Her hand was quickly extended, almost before he had thought of offering his.

Aylmer often felt exasperated with himself because of a certain slowness that sometimes encompassed him—a slowness to show small courtesies. Dick Devensley's readiness in all little matters of social etiquette had often been envied by Aylmer. However, apparently she had not judged that he was at all remiss. If it was her tact, he was grateful for it. There was a gentle curve about her lips; he noted a little trick of her eyelids. It was an involuntary movement, but he had never observed it before; the lashes drooped with an effect tender yet retiring. He could not repress a smile of triumph was it? No, we must say exhilaration; he could scarcely prevent this smile from carrying him into some extravagance. The blonde moustache concealed the slightly parted lips, but to the corners of his eyes the smile rippled, and the blue pupils were full of bright scintillations.

"I am fortunate," said he. "I am glad I took Eastgate on my way home. I have been in the Drapery, if you know where that is."

"Oh, of course I know it," replied she.

"Well, I will confess I took Eastgate because I thought I might meet with you."

"On any other day of the week you might not have been so successful."

"I have pleaded guilty to malice prepense. I did indeed time myself to the hour when I believed you would regain your freedom, but you have not forgotten that this afternoon you gave me permission to call upon you? Do you leave me here?"

"Yes. For so much forethought and trouble, I am afraid you are badly served. Here our paths separate."

"If you will be so cruel, Edith. But do you think the thought of personal trouble where you are concerned is of any moment to me? You recollect the request of mine last night. See, the time is not late; you can afford me half an hour surely. Half an hour is not much to ask. I have more to say to you, I find, and of such a nature I scarcely feel that I could unburthen myself between four walls and with other company near." He spoke earnestly. She stood irresolute, but yielding.

"Let us make a short detour; we need not go so far as the Abbey. It is a way sacred to nurse-maids and their charges," said he, with a laugh. "Pray take my arm—may I carry that roll of music?—thanks." He placed it under his arm as if virtually it had changed ownership, and that he had some possession in its owner. It seemed to him also that the hand upon his other arm was gradually resigning its freedom.

The quarter-jacks echoed in the cold air, then the larger bell struck one.

"I am earlier away to-day than I expected I should be," said she.

"Then we can prolong our walk if we choose. Q.E.D. Although I should be sorry to vex Lady Mary, or cause her any alarm. I am afraid Lady Mary has not a first-rate opinion of me. I know I am a culpable being, my designs are nefarious. I begin to be very doubtful of ever gaining her esteem."

"Sometimes," said Edith, "I have been inclined to think she really did doubt you, and I have felt ashamed when she has shown herself unusually curt and brusque, and she has been in such a mood when she met you I do know, and more times than one. I think if you saw more of her you would like her, and when she got to know you better—"

"Oh, I am ashamed of myself," said Aylmer, quickly. "Edith!" cried he, suddenly stopping, "why cannot I know more of her? We have got far on our walk, and you have been so outspoken and frank with me I must take heart of grace. Will you not give me the right to know her better, and study her more, under your direction? I would be a docile pupil, dear. You remember the afternoon when I felt constrained to speak? I did not press you then; I had some idea of your situation. Now it is all so different; nothing stands between us now. What can stand between us? You are free. If I am not rich, I can at least make you a home, and that I could not have said so confidently six months back. I have loved you long silently and reticently. Now the faint heart can pluck up courage; all along it has been faithful to you, but it will love you in the future more openly and more courageously."

He had taken her hand, almost unconsciously; he placed his other hand upon it. It was the old,

old story, yet new and ever new; the same old, old picture—a lover looking into his mistress's eyes for consent, waiting for the music of her voice.

"Have you not one word in reply, sweetheart? The past is done with, the future lies before us—a happy future. We have both of us reached an age when we can look calmly forward. Shall we stay upon the threshold? No, no. Edith, the year is waning; is there not a word for me?"

His voice was pleading, and full of the tenderest humility.

But if there came no word, some sign gave him courage to clasp her with passionate eagerness to his heart. She did not shrink away, not when his lips sought hers.

"My darling, have you not a confession for me? Do you not love me a little? I have hungered and thirsted for your affection, to hear you say that you indeed do love me."

He was gaining heart and strength, compelling a response.

"Love you?" she murmured. "Yes, oh yes! Why did you not speak years ago? I thought it never was to come. Have I not lived wearily so long? Were you not my other I, undergoing trials? And I said, 'We are alike; could we but share our trials and our wounds, how sweet would be our joys after! Dearest, I had no heart to give to other than yourself; but you spoke not. What could I do?'

Again he pressed her to his heart. The cold day, the absence of vernal charms, were all forgotten. There was an abandonment, a surrender too deep for words; soul met soul in a locked embrace. Life was now only for them; before them the winged-boy sped, rejoicing though his bow was spent.

CHAPTER XXIV. EDITH'S DOWRY.

DARKNESS crept on early, and still the lights were not yet lit in the old house in the Minster precincts. But the fire in the grate burned cheerfully, illuminating the room, softening defects, bringing out bright projections, and casting over everything that glow of comfort and happiness which we all prize. Lady Mary Footitt sat back in her huge arm-chair, the expression on her face the reverse of tranquil. From time to time she regarded the countenance of her niece sitting opposite her with more than common solicitude. Indeed, the old lady looked most despondent; and the face was so full of brightness and radiance, so incredible apparently, of pitfalls in the future.

"Aunty, are you unwell?" inquired Edith, looking up and catching the troubled look on Lady Mary's face.

"No," replied Lady Mary brusquely.

"Have I displeased you, aunty?"

"That man has asked you to marry him, and you have consented."

"Yes," said Edith, simply.

"What will you do? You will have to wait, wait, wait, a long, long time. It is an unsatisfactory engagement to enter upon."

"Aunty, he has asked me to marry him at once, and we only wait your approval."

"I cannot approve of it."

"You will not have to live by yourself, dear aunt."

"I will not have him here."

"Oh, aunty, he has not thought of such an arrangement. Aunt, he wishes you to believe him honest; he does wish to have your goodwill. Why do you doubt him, dear aunty? I cannot doubt him!"

"I haven't been rude to him, have I?" demanded Lady Mary, hotly.

"No, no; but he is so sensitive, aunty."

"One would scarcely believe otherwise," Lady Mary retorted sarcastically. "And do you think of going into that stuffy little house—Bachelor's Hall, as they call it? why, its very name would be desecrated."

"No, aunty," stammered Edith, "of course not. He has taken 'Shepincotes'."

"'Shepincotes'?" shrieked Lady Mary, aghast. "Why, the man is mad; he is courting bankruptcy, he cannot afford 'Shepincotes'! Where is all his money coming from, pray, to keep up such a house?"

"I don't know," answered Edith, herself now almost overwhelmed with her aunt's denunciatory contempt and indignation. She had asked her lover diffidently if 'Shepincotes' was not too large, and he had smiled at her and pinched her cheek, and said to her, banteringly, that his practice must be made to give better returns.

"You are to live with us there, if you will," Edith ventured timidly; "you have often said if you could choose a residence, it should be 'Shepincotes.' Such a quaint old house."

"I live there, child! you are both cracked, or I am. Where is his money coming from I want to know?"

"From his fairy godmother, aunty."

"Rubbish; don't jest in that way, Edith, if you have any respect for me. He comes to-night. Well, it will be my duty to speak to him. Oh, I will show him I can be very civil."

"Oh, aunty, do not be harsh or brusque."

"My dear, I shall not overstep my duty. Eh, Davison, what gentleman; oh, Mr. Aubrey Thomas Aylmer. Show him in, Davison," muttered Lady Mary, holding a card to the firelight. "We must have a light I suppose. Where is there a spill, I wonder? Edith, why there is but one Aubrey Aylmer," exclaimed Lady Mary loudly.

"Yes there is, Lady Mary," said a voice behind Davison, whose wits were pre-eminently keen. There was a twinkle in Davison's eyes, and the corners of her mouth were drawn down, but Davison recollects herself, and sought her own domain, and the voice continued—

"I am Aubrey Aylmer; there are two Aubreys. The elder Aubrey sends this gift to his nephew's future wife, and his remembrance to her aunt."

"Or is it from the fairy godmother?" questioned Edith, as she received the sparkling gems—Sir Aubrey's gift.

"And will Lady Mary go with us to 'Shepincotes'?" asked Edith's lover, forgetfully.

"I cannot give a dowry with Edith, Mr. Aylmer," burst forth Lady Mary, hotly. "And what are you going to do at 'Shepincotes'? I can

do nothing for you; I have no money. I cannot give her a portion."

"Yes, you can, Lady Mary."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Aylmer."

"I will ask you for what I shall consider a fair and legitimate portion, as you say—presently."

"Oh!" sighed Lady Mary in utter misery, and turned her face despairingly to the fire. The man was mad. He would not take her word even. Perhaps he was taking her to be a miserly old woman, with bags of gold granaried in the attic.

"But the fairy godmother!" began Aylmer. "Edith, you are not fairly curious. Lady Mary may remember a peculiar lady visiting my parents some years ago."

"I do remember her," said Lady Mary impassively; but Edith, with some inward amusement, could see her aunt was grimly restraining her face from exhibiting any signs of excitement.

"Poor lady, she was much more prosaic than the fairy godmother, a very practical person; and if I cannot produce her, I can produce a copy of the will of the most generous being. She used to tell my father she had forty thousand pounds, and her godson would inherit—"

"Forty thousand pounds!" exclaimed Lady Mary, forgetting herself, her studied reserve stifled, her natural self coming out again. "Edith, do you hear? It cannot be true."

Edith was pale and trembling. She looked up into her lover's eyes with tender reproach. Why had he concealed this—to test her love for him? Aylmer nodded to her, his eyelids drooping—a smile, though, on his face. He directed Edith's attention to her excited aunt. Edith could not then forbear smiling.

"Forty thousand pounds!" exclaimed Lady Mary again, adding shrewdly, "but then she has not left all, or she has behaved ill to her blood relations."

"She had no near relatives, Lady Mary; my father was near as any one, and he was accustomed to say consanguinity had run out. Desforges knows another branch of the same name, but he is doubtful whether they knew anything of each other. There are a few legacies to be paid, there is some property to realize. Do you think, Lady Mary, we can keep up 'Shepincotes'?"

"I think the world is coming to an end. But this splendid gift from Sir Aubrey? How come you to be good friends?"

"Why, Lady Mary, don't you know?"

"Know? It seems to me I know next to nothing," declared Lady Mary, somewhat crest-fallen.

"You have not yet learned the cause of my absence, that I went to Norway at my uncle's request?"

"Oh, Edith was telling me something; but I am an old woman; it went in at one ear and out at the other. I remember; that poor boy was drowned! Poor boy! what a shock to Aubrey! But old Aubrey had two sons?"

"He had," assented Aylmer. "The report in the newspaper gave it both sons were drowned. It was incorrect. Sir Aubrey's son was drowned in attempting to rescue his friend."

"The other boy, then, will succeed?"

"No, Lady Mary; it is three or four years since he died of his mother's complaint—consumption. Lady Mary, I was indeed ignorant of that until I

got to Chesterton Park, and found Sir Aubrey lamenting the cruel mischance which had left him childless."

"Then you are heir to the baronetcy," stammered Lady Mary, regarding Aylmer tremulously. She was surprised, confused, almost frightened.

"Certainly, Lady Mary; but if that poor boy could have been restored to life——"

"Yes, yes; I will believe you. Sir Aubrey must have confidence in you. Perhaps I ought to have had. I beg your pardon."

"No, no, Lady Mary; I will not have you supplicating me; there is no occasion for it. Will you reside with us at 'Shepincotes'? Edith says you used to like 'Shepincotes' years ago."

"When Captain Griffin was there, yes," said Lady Mary honestly. "I almost wish you had remained the poor doctor; I could have bullied you heartily, and then I wouldn't have left my old house."

"Oh, aunty, when first Aubrey mentioned 'Shepincotes' to me, I didn't like questioning him too closely; but I wondered what we should do with such a big house, and he—he said my dowry would help; and, aunty, a lump came into my throat, for I was so foolish as to think he really expected I had a little money. I wished to explain; he would not hear a word. I don't know yet what he really did mean."

"He will explain," said Lady Mary.

"Yes," said Aylmer smiling; "but if Lady Mary accompanies us to 'Shepincotes' she will bring us Edith's dowry, unless," he added, with a provoking pause, "she is determined to call a sale, and disperse her treasures."

"And the dowry is the china jar," cried Edith exultantly. "Why did I not comprehend before? You will not sell the china jar, aunty?" said Edith, with her hands one on each of her lover's shoulders. "How stupid of me to be so mystified. Aunty, won't you give me my dowry, you will not sell the jar? He was in love with it long before he ventured to speak to me."

THE END.

History of John Bull, besides many medical treatises and essays. One of the most witty sayings of Dr. Arbuthnot that have come down to us is his epitaph for a physician, which is even now quoted when any one wishes to have a hit at the professors of the healing art: "si monumentum quereris circumspice."

Another literary medical celebrity, although of a later date, was Dr. Kitchener. He was the son of a coal-merchant, and inherited a large fortune, but this did not prevent him from assiduously studying his profession. He is remembered, however, now chiefly for the fact that his house was the resort of the most celebrated wits and *bon vivants* of the day. Supposed to keep the best table and have the finest wine-cellars in London, he was himself an authority on the culinary art, having written a book, popular in its time, called the *Cook's Oracle*. He also appointed a committee of taste amongst his friends. George Colman, the dramatist, was one of these, and an especial favourite. An illustration of the sort of taste exhibited may be gathered from the following story of Colman. Dr. Kitchener, who delighted in little eccentricities, had caused to be written up over the doors of the various rooms in his house mottoes appropriate to the use the room was generally put to. Over the entrance to the dining-hall he had painted up the following reminder: "Dinner at seven, go at eleven;" and it was the dramatist's interpolation of a little monosyllable in this admonition which gave rise to a drinking bout, celebrated even in those days of free living. Being the first guest to arrive, Colman altered the sense of it entirely, for upon the doctor's attention being directed to the inscription, he read, to his astonishment, "Come at seven, go it at eleven!" which the guests did, and the wines were punished accordingly.

Many are the anecdotes extant concerning Sir Richard Jebb, a well-known physician who flourished in the reign of George III. One is a story he tells of himself, which makes even rapacity itself comical. He was attending a nobleman, from whom he had a right to expect a fee of five guineas, when to his surprise he received only three. Suspecting some trick on the part of the steward, from whom he received it, he, at the very next visit, contrived to drop the three guineas. They were picked up and again deposited in his hand; but he still continued to look on the carpet. His lordship asked if all the guineas were found. "There must be two still on the carpet," replied Sir Richard, "for I have but three." The hint was taken at once. He relates of himself also, that, whilst travelling in the East, he was excessively anxious to study certain native methods of treating diseases, of which he had heard a great deal, and on one occasion, was considerably nonplussed by the reply he received from an old sheik when he asked him how they managed with sick people who couldn't sleep. The answer he received, if not interesting from a medical point of view, was undoubtedly practical, for the sheik said, "We set them to watch the camels." Sir Richard was first cousin to Dr. John Jebb, a dissenting minister, who was well-known for his political opinions and writings. This relationship, after his appointment as physician to the court, he had some cause to regret, being frequently taken to task for the sins of his unworthy relative by

ANECDOTES OF MEDICAL CELEBRITIES

II.

ONE of the medical celebrities of Queen Anne's reign was Dr. John Arbuthnot who in his early days occupied a very different position to that he enjoyed later in life, and after he had become known as a political writer of no mean power. It was this literary eminence which led to his appointment as one of the physicians to the Queen. When a young man he endeavoured to settle as a physician at Dorchester, a town which is remarkable for its healthy situation, and therefore unpropitious for medical practice. One day he most unexpectedly started, bag and baggage, for London. "Where are you going, Arbuthnot?" asked a friend who met him riding post-haste. "To leave your confounded town," was the reply, "for a man can neither live nor die there." Upon Dr. Arbuthnot's settlement in London, he became associated with Pope and Swift. He contributed to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, and wrote a witty political pamphlet entitled *The*

His Majesty George III. himself. On one occasion, when the King was in a more than usual good humour, the physician defended him in these words, "And it please your Majesty, if my cousin were in heaven he would be a reformer."

That a soft answer sometimes turns away wrath is proved by the behaviour of Sir William Browne, the fashionable physician, when he was once for a fancied slight caricatured most unmercifully on the public stage by the actor Foote. It was expected the doctor would have sued him for libel; but he only sent Foote his muff, with a note informing him that he had forgotten to notice that part of his costume. This dignified act of forbearance at once disarmed the actor's anger, and he satirized Browne no more. Foote's opinion of medical men generally, may be gathered from the following extract which he has put into the mouth of one of the characters in his well-known comedy of "The Liar." He there makes the apothecary, when Sir Jacob Lint observes, "We are a little better instructed, Master Lint; formerly, indeed, a fit of illness was very expensive; but now physic is cheaper than food," cry "Marry, heaven forbid!" "Why," replies Sir Jacob, "a fever that would formerly have cost you a fortune you may now cure for penn'orth of powder." "Or kill, Sir Jacob, or kill," says the apothecary. "I am sorry to find a man of your worship's dignity a promoter of puffs, an encourager of quacks." SIR JACOB. "Regulars, Lint, regulars; look at their names, not a soul of them but is either P.L. or M.D." Lint's comment need not be quoted, but it is of the derogatory school suggested by such words as "plaguy liars," "murderous dogs," etc. With one more anecdote of Sir William Browne, and we are done. In his younger days he for some years paid his addresses, but unsuccessfully, to a fashionable beauty, and during the period had always accustomed himself to propose her health whenever he was called upon for a lady. That Sir William was not heart-broken at this failure in love may be guessed from his being able to joke over it as he did under the following circumstances. Being observed one evening to omit it, a gentleman present reminded him that he had forgotten to toast his favourite lady. "Why, indeed," said Sir William, "I find it all in vain; I have toasted the lady so long, and cannot make her *Browne*, that I am determined to toast her no more."

J. G.

THE BODY IN THE BLACK BOX.

BY J. M. BARRIE.

THE first time I saw him I made up my mind to kill him. I never knew his name. I had been in every street in London that day, every day and night that week, and no one had spoken to me. All the others had people to speak to. There was only one face I knew. It was inside a shop in High Holborn, and the first time I saw It It nodded to me. After that I used to stand outside and nod back to It, and It beckoned to me to come in, but I was frightened. It wore a scarf round its neck, frayed at both ends; and when any one looked at it except me it covered its face

with its hands and ran away. It was the only thing that took any notice of me. One day I stayed there all through the forenoon, and they came out and drove me away. When I thought the shopman had forgotten me I crept back, and there It was still. It made a sign to me to go away until the lamps were lighted, but I could not go further than the other side of the street. I looked across, and though I could not see it, I knew it was there; and it saw me. At night, when every one had gone away, I crept back and crouched down at the window. But it was dark. I sat and waited. All that night it rained. When the policeman came I hid in a court, for I knew he was looking for me, and when his footsteps had died away I went back. Once the moon shone out, and then I saw It again. I tried to speak, but I could not. I could never speak to it. I tapped on the window, and it tapped back. Then I tapped louder and louder, and it tapped louder and louder, until all the houses and all the streets rattled and shook, and I put my fingers to my ears and ran away. In the morning I was back again, and still It was there. It was waiting for me, and it nodded when I came. I pointed to the shopman and it put its scarf over its face.

Then he came. I can see him still, but he is dead now. He wore a glossy hat, and carried a cane and a glove in his left hand. The glove was the colour of blood, red; and the cane had a bone handle. I did not think of it at the time, but I was glad to know afterwards that he was handsome. His hair was fair, and I know now that he divided it down the middle. He was crossing the street when I saw him first, and when he reached the pavement he bent down and dusted the legs of his trousers with his loose glove. When he looked up he was smiling, and I hated him for that.

He went into the shop where It was, and I saw he frightened it. It put its scarf over its face. It did not nod to me now, but it shook as if he had taken it by the shoulder and was going to beat it. He was smiling when I looked at him again, but it trembled all the time, and looked at me as if it wanted me to take its part. It was my only friend, but I was frightened. I stood at the edge of the window and watched. The shopman said something about it, and pointed to me, and I heard him laughing. It was the laugh of a man who had friends to speak to and to love him. I ran off down two streets and round a square, and still I heard him laughing. After a long time I was back again, and he was there still, and so was It. He came out and spoke to me, and though I shrank back I heard what he said. It was, "You infernal idiot, do you not know your own shadow?" Yes, I knew it. I thought it was my shadow all the time. I feared it; that was why I never spoke to it. I wanted to speak. But what right had he to laugh at my only friend, the only thing that looked at me and waited for me, and was glad when I came? I ran to the window, and It was gone. I shook my fist at him, and he turned round and smiled again. Then I thought I would kill him.

He went along Holborn twirling his cane, when there was room for it, and smiling I was sure, though I only saw the back of his head. I followed him. From that moment for seventeen days I saw nothing but the back of his head. It

was long and narrow, and there was a red mark on his neck that his collar tried to hide. I could have laid my hand upon him among a hundred thousand heads. What I dreaded was that he would take a 'bus or call a cab; then I would have lost him, for I dared not do that. But I would have found him out for all that. It was a fresh spring morning, though the streets were wet, and he walked all the way. It was a long road, but we did not weary. He had not much money, though he smiled. There was a reason why he wanted to save his money. I was glad when I found that out too. I often see her now, and she kisses me. She holds the hands I did it with.

We went along Holborn until we came to Furnival's Inn. He went in there to see a friend and I waited for him at the foot of the stairs. When I heard him coming down I went into the street again, and then we went on. Our way took us along the Viaduct and into Cheapside, and I knew the road as well as he did. He waved his cane to more than one person on a 'bus, and I liked that. At last we got into King William Street, and went down one of the lanes running off it. He stopped at number 17 and pushed open the door with his cane. Then the door shut and kept me out. But I knew I had him now. It was an insurance office, and he was a clerk.

It was six hours before he came out again, but I did not grow tired. I thought it was reasonable in him to take his time, and I walked up and down. I would have waited there though he had stayed for a week. There was a back door, but it only led to some out-houses surrounded by high walls, so I knew that when he did come out he could not escape me. I wanted to think. All that day I debated with myself how I should do it and when, and I was glad that when he came out I had not made up my mind. I wanted to think, think it all out slowly, to plan it so that nothing could come between me and him when the time came, and to drag out the days between as long as possible. I would have grudged sleeping now, in case I should not dream of it, and perhaps if I had slept he would have got away. It was awful to think that I might wake to find him gone. So I went backward and forward and watched.

Twice that day I saw him at the window. It was a grimy window of wrinkled glass, but I saw him looking down into the street. There was another one with him, and they were always laughing. They did not see me, but I knew why they laughed. He was telling his friend about me. I did not shake my fist at him now. I tried to laugh, but I could never laugh. I was glad to see him happy. I was to kill him. I had never any doubt about that. I was quite composed. One night in the streets they took my hand and said I was in a fever; but all that had passed away.

At four o'clock they came out together, and I followed them. I did not slouch along the sides of the houses any longer, but walked straight like a man who has his business to attend to. To look at me you would have thought I was hurrying home to get my tea from my sister's hand and to sit at the fire and talk. I think I used to do that, but I am not sure. If I had a mother, she wore a checked winsey gown and fastened it with a brooch that had the picture of

a boy on it. He wore a velveteen suit with brass buttons on it, and they said he was me. But he is standing in green fields, and I have been wandering about London for a thousand years and a month. That is why I have no friends now. It is all so long ago.

We parted with the other one in Cheapside, and went back the way we came. We went a long way. He walked faster now and I walked faster too. Once he went into a shop and I waited for him. He stayed a long time and when he came out there was something different about him, but I could not make out what it was. He hailed a hansom now, and when he got in, I hung on behind. He went into a house in Mornington Road, and I thought it was where he lived. But by-and-by he came out and dismissed the cab, and we turned back. At the end of the street he stopped and waved his hat. It was then I saw that his hair was divided down the middle. She stood on the balcony and bent over it to look at him. She was only two inches high. I nearly laughed. Then we went on. We went down Hampstead Road and along Euston Road and down Woburn Place. He opened a door in GUILFORD Street, with a latch key, and I did not see him again that night.

I sat all night on the steps. I was wondering what it was that was different in him now. I could not kill him till I found that out. Once in the night time when there were only the devils and myself in the streets I rang the bell to ask him, but when I heard it clang in the darkness I hid. It rang for an hour and then it stopped, and I sat down again and waited. In the morning he came out smiling and I got up and went away with him. We went to the office. When he stopped I stopped, and when he went on I went on too. I waited for him at doors, and once when he took a 'bus I ran behind it. When he got down, then we went on as before. I never left him.

Once I lost him. He went into Furnival's Inn and did not come out. I waited a long time, and then I grew frightened that he had gone out at the other end. I ran up the stairs and rattled at his friend's door, and when he opened it I rushed past him and ran from room to room. When I saw he was not there I screamed out and jumped down the stairs and ran hard into Cheapside. I never stopped till I came to the office, and then I saw him at the window. I cried for joy, and that night I climbed into his bedroom to kill him. I sat for an hour at his bedside, and he slept all the time. I twisted his mouth round to make him smile, but I could not kill him till I knew what it was that was different in him.

He went into the shop two days afterwards, and I looked in again and found it out. I saw what the change in him was now. I always walked behind him, and never took my eyes off his neck. He got something in the shop to rub on the red mark before he went to the house in Mornington Road. When I could not see it I always looked for it, and when I missed it I was angry. He did it on purpose. But when I crept close to him, it was still there. Then I thought I would kill him when it had disappeared. After that I had no more worry, but every night I climbed into his room and looked at it when he slept, and it got smaller and smaller. He was glad to see it going, and so was I.

I had three pounds eleven and sixpence in my pockets, and a cheque for one million pounds at my lodgings. I never used them: I could not. Once I went into a shop for something to eat, and they looked at me and jingled my money on the counter, so I ran out and I never went into that street again. Sometimes, though, I stood at the end of it and looked, and there was the man at the door looking for me. None of the shops would take my money, and I was hungry. I used to steal. I crept close up to barrowfuls of oranges and hid an orange beneath my coat when no one was looking. I ate some of my own clothes, and yet I was hungry. At that time I could have eaten for ever, and I would always have been hungry. But after I saw him I was never hungry any more.

My landlady tried to get my secret out of me, but I was too cunning for her. One night when he was in bed I went back to my lodgings and opened the door, and she was standing there with a candle in her hand. She asked me if I had been murdering people, and I put my finger on my lips and she smiled, and then I went away. She was always there when I opened the door, and sometimes I held the candle, and then she put her finger to her lips and I nodded.

But the boot-blacks knew all about it. You can keep nothing from them. When I passed them they pointed at me and whispered "murderer;" so did the busdrivers; and they jeered at me because I was so long in doing it. But he never heard, and they were the only ones who knew.

I only saw it once again. It came one day when I stood at his open office-door looking in at him. It told me to put him in the black box. I crept down the stairs, and ran up and down the street waving my hands. Now I knew where to put him. The black box stood against one of the office walls, and it was a coffin. I knew I could put him there and no one would know, for nobody opens coffin-lids.

I was tired of waiting now, but I could not kill him till the mark was gone. I had promised that to the shoe-blacks, if they would not tell. It got less and less, but sometimes it was redder than ever, and then I stamped my feet. When I had to hold a candle close to his neck before I could see it I trembled with joy. The first time I did that was on the ninth night. It was more distinct again on the tenth, and on the thirteenth it had disappeared. Then I knew I would kill him that day.

We were both in good spirits in the morning when we started on our last walk together. He went so slowly this time that I wondered if he knew it was his last day. But I do not think he did, for he smiled a great deal. If the mark had been there I would have been angry with him for loitering on the way, but to-day I let him do as he liked. He went into a shop and bought a necktie. I wear it now. He called again at Furnival's Inn to bid his friend good-bye, and then we went on for the last time down Cheapside and into King William Street to the office, where the coffin was waiting.

I did not wait outside this time, but went up the stairs behind him and into the office. The other one was there, but I made a sign to him to go, and he went away. I stood at the door. When

people came up the stairs I waved them back and they went down again. I stood waiting for him to smile. He took off his coat and sat down on a high stool and began to write. It is a large room and the fire was out. I stood there a long time. At last he smiled, and then the coffin-lid opened wide. I shut the door and he saw me. He did not smile. I took his head in my hands, my thumbs gripping his chin, and pressed hard. I kept them there till there was no shape in his face and his eyes fell out. When I saw he was dead, I tried to make him smile. I carried him to the black box and laid him in it, and the lid shut on him with a snap. Then I put on his coat, and sat down on his stool and began to write.

I am well and happy now. I live in his lodgings and do his work, and they all think I am he. When I am alone in the office I try to open the lid of the coffin, but it will not move. I know he is there, but I would like to see him. Every day I go along Holborn and Cheapside to the office. Sometimes I stop at Furnival's Inn. The shoe-blacks and the busmen know me and point at me, but I am always looking for them now. On Thursday she is to marry me; we are to live at Mornington Road. She, too, thinks I am he. My employer asked me what he would give her for a wedding present? and I said the black box in the office. I think she will be able to open it, and then we shall see if he is smiling still.

* * * * *

This manuscript was found some months since in an otherwise empty desk in a house in Guilford Street. It had been the property of a lodger who had taken a room in the house about a year ago. The irregularity of his habits disturbed his landlady, who never knew when he was in the house, and though she considered him a very quiet amiable young man, she gave him notice to quit. He disappeared that night, as he had sometimes done before, but she never saw him again. He left all his things behind him, including some loose money. An endeavour has been made to trace him, but without success. His landlady thinks he was in an Insurance Office, but he never spoke to her of his affairs. No friends called on him and he got no letters. He paid his rent regularly. He used to sit by the fire staring straight before him, and from his reflection in the cheval glass above it she sometimes saw him laughing to himself. On one of these occasions she noticed a red mark on the back of his neck. There was nothing on the mantelpiece to attract any-one's attention. Its only ornaments were two glass vases and a small black box.

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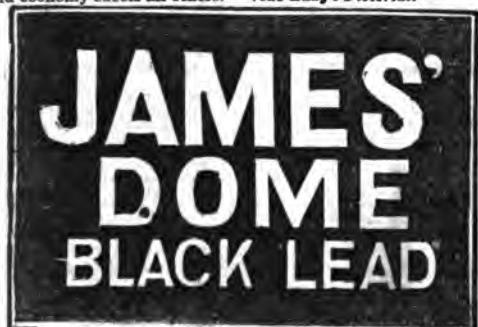
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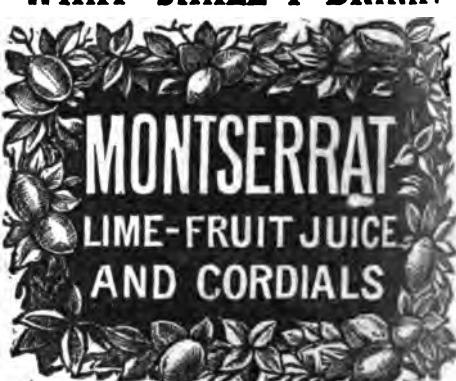
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